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High-level political forum on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council

Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the forum on financing for development follow-up, including the special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (New York, 23-26 April 2018)

I. Introduction

1. The third forum on financing for development follow-up of the Economic and Social Council was convened by Marie Chatardova (Czechia), President of the Council, at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 23 to 26 April 2018. The forum, including the special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, featured an unprecedented level of engagement and participation by all stakeholders. Thirty-six ministers, vice-ministers and senior government officials attended the forum, representing a record number since the inception of the forum. The forum also attracted a more diverse body of participants from the investment community, including major commercial banks, asset managers and development banks.

2. Overall, the discussions of the forum were characterized by long-term orientation, a strong focus on the most vulnerable countries and sensitivity to systemic risks. The forum conveyed an overarching message that policymakers should capitalize on the economic upturn to fix the deep-rooted systemic challenges and vulnerabilities related to financing the Sustainable Development Goals. The forum adopted by consensus a set of intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations. The outcome document contains critical actions to be taken forward and to feed into the overall follow-up to and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

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II. Opening of the forum on financing for development follow-up

3. The forum was opened by the President of the Economic and Social Council, with addresses by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General (by video message) and the Deputy Secretary-General.

4. The President of the Economic and Social Council welcomed the progress made in all action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and called on the international community to build on the upturn in the global economy and address risks posed by crises and shocks. She emphasized the importance of fulfilling commitments and taking concrete action on the ground, including through national sustainable development strategies coupled with long-term plans for financing the Sustainable Development Goals. Such investment needed to be sustainable and inclusive, ensuring that no one was left behind and that the countries in greatest need also benefited. In that regard, the forum provided a critical platform to facilitate knowledge-sharing among States and development partners.

5. The President of the General Assembly pointed out that investments, financing and partnerships needed to be scaled up to meet the ambitious vision of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Nevertheless, the current rate of progress was insufficient for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Overcoming financing gaps was essential, alongside efforts to mobilize all means of implementation. Rather than "throwing money at the problem", he recommended a more strategic and targeted approach, with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda showing the way. The forum was an important space for assessing progress, sharing experiences, translating commitments into action and digging deeper for solutions to ensure implementation. To reinforce collective efforts on urgent financing needs, he announced that he would host a high-level event on financing the Sustainable Development Goals on 11 June 2018.

6. Addressing the forum by video message, the Secretary-General emphasized that financing challenges could not be overcome in isolation. He underlined the need to uphold commitments on official development assistance (ODA) while promoting entrepreneurship and free and fair trade. National resource mobilization should be broadened through ensuring tax reform and good governance. The international community needed to fight money-laundering and illicit financial flows. Governments and businesses must work in partnership to unlock the needed capital. The Secretary-General announced his decision to host a high-level meeting on finance in September 2018, with a view to encouraging action by world leaders and all partners to invest in a sustainable and prosperous future for all.

7. The Deputy Secretary-General emphasized that national leadership, ownership and implementation were at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and that mobilization of domestic resources was fundamental. ODA continued to be critical, and it was worrisome that ODA had stagnated for some of the most vulnerable countries. International efforts must be strengthened to support infrastructure investment, as well as to combat tax evasion, money-laundering and illicit financial flows. There was also need for a change in mindset and a scaling up in innovation, both for supporting longer-term investments in sustainable development and for unlocking resources for countries beset by crises and shocks. The Deputy Secretary-General informed participants that the United Nations country and regional presence was improving coherence for better delivery of results on the ground, in line with the overall reform vision of the Secretary-General.

III. Keynote and special addresses

8. Donald Kaberuka, High Representative of the African Union Peace Fund and former President of the African Development Bank, delivered a keynote address. He argued that, with the 2030 Agenda, the international community had transcended North-South bifurcation to embrace a pluralist, multipolar view of global sustainable development challenges and resources for overcoming those challenges. ODA would continue to be important in such a context, but it needed to be "smart". In that regard, he recommended putting fragility at the centre of discussions in future forums and other financing-related events. Mr. Kaberuka underlined that there was currently a window of opportunity in the global economy to mobilize significant resources from many actors for the Sustainable Development Goals. That required not only greater capacities at the national level, but also a clearer commitment from the international community to address illicit financial flows. Strengthening multilateral institutions and steering clear of zero-sum national policies should therefore animate the pursuit of the Goals through 2030.

9. Sultan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, delivered a special address to share the outcomes of the High-level Conference on Financing for Development and the Means of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which had been organized by Qatar in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in November 2017. The conference had resulted in the "Doha messages" aimed at strengthening coherence and cooperation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The messages underlined the importance of meeting the enormous financing needs of the Sustainable Development Goals through a mix of all available resources. Domestic resource mobilization for long-term development did not have to come at the cost of meeting urgent short-term needs. National development banks, as well as blended finance, had strong potential to address shortfalls in current funding. International development cooperation remained essential to support those most in need and those furthest behind. Engaging all relevant stakeholders was critical.

IV. Perspectives from the 2018 report of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development

10. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Chair of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, introduced the 2018 report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development. Noting the mixed picture in the world economy, Mr. Liu pointed out that most types of development financing flows had increased, but global risks remained high. Increasing interest rates, debt vulnerabilities and the adoption of inward-looking policies could derail progress. Financial sector incentives needed to be long term in orientation and aligned with sustainable development. The growing interest in sustainable investment was welcome, but such risks needed greater attention. He emphasized that policies, plans and project pipelines needed to be informed by integrated national financing strategies, reaching beyond political cycles. The Task Force would continue to work on financing frameworks and strategies in its 2019 report, analysing national actions and the global enabling environment needed to facilitate long-term investment. Public finance remained essential and the importance of meeting ODA commitments could not be overemphasized; it was also important to scale up South-South cooperation. Furthermore, quality private and blended finance were important, but national development priorities would determine which financing models and related actors were best positioned to manage risks and provide services.

11. In a video message to the forum, Roberto Azevêdo, Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), stated that international trade and WTO were important resources in support of implementing the 2030 Agenda. The opening of the world economy had advanced living standards for billions of people, with developing countries' share of global trade increasing significantly in recent decades. Trade was now growing at a sustained pace, which could underpin global economic growth and contribute to poverty eradication. There was a risk that this could be undermined by the recent, rising spectre of protectionism. Instead of escalating tensions, disputes should be resolved constructively. WTO was delivering results in response to member demands, including the conclusion of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and the abolishment of agricultural export subsidies. WTO continued to address current and emerging issues such as food security, fishery subsidies and closing the gaps in trade finance, which were felt disproportionately by smaller players.

12. Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), underlined the importance of disaggregating the global headlines on financing for development, noting that the reality "on the ground" was varied and complex. He suggested that the Task Force, and the United Nations system as a whole, should think about how its financing-related work reflected and spoke to people's reality. Recommendations should be communicated in ways that would empower users to make better decisions. Focusing on rapid technological change and its associated challenges was one option for creating a link to everyday concerns. Among the public, there were difficult questions about job loss and fiscal and tax policies that privileged capital over labour. Another opportunity for engaging pragmatically with people's concerns was the issue of volatility — whether as a result of conflict, economic vulnerability or environmental shock. Instruments should be developed that better connected to those realities. On sustainable finance, the discussion should move away from finding the needed capital to aligning and attracting existing capital to where it was most needed. UNDP could help to test new ideas and facilitate best practices in its work on the ground.

13. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), cautioned that the recent economic upturn might not signal sustained improvement over the medium term and underscored the continued importance of strong multilateralism. Rising protectionism and growing paralysis with regard to certain parts of the trade agenda were cause for concern. The international community should take advantage of where progress was being made, such as at the regional level with the African Continental Free Trade Area. Regarding technology transfer, the issue of automation and robotics should not overshadow the challenges and opportunities associated with the digital economy. Finally, he underlined the growing significance of debt in developing countries, including high corporate debt in middle-income countries, which would be transferred to public balance sheets in the event of a crisis. He recommended reviving the discussion on sovereign debt restructuring.

14. Tao Zhang, Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), noted that conditions in some emerging economies had become more challenging, especially among commodity exporters. IMF projected that growth would weaken in many developing countries in the next five years, with serious implications for the Sustainable Development Goals. Many low-income and developing countries were accumulating more debt. To address the debt problems, borrowers should strengthen capacity, focus on projects with realistic rates of return and improve domestic resource mobilization. Lenders should assess the impact of new loans on debt positions and coordinate more effectively with official lenders, among other things. IMF was committed to working closely with its members to strengthen their approaches to debt management. Mr. Zhang emphasized the need to

focus on diversification, especially among commodity exporters, as well as development of the financial system, the business environment, entrepreneurship and human capital.

15. Mahmoud Mohieldin, Senior Vice President for the 2030 Development Agenda, United Nations Relations and Partnerships of the World Bank Group, referred to the important capital increase package agreed at the 2018 Spring Meetings of the World Bank as a prime example of how the international community could work together through the multilateral system in support of the 2030 Agenda. The significance was not simply the size of the increase, but rather the additional resources it could leverage. The impact of the increase would drive progress in low-income countries and fragile States, as well as enhance gender equality and partnerships with the private sector. Progress on domestic resource mobilization should be quickened. The joint work of IMF, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations to promote improved tax collection and public expenditure at the national and local levels was critical. The accumulation of public debt deserved greater attention, as its potential impact could be even worse than the consequences of the global financial crisis on developing countries. Due diligence in lending decisions, sound principles of sustainable financing and contingency plans for debt restructuring were therefore important areas of work.

16. On behalf of the five regional commissions, Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), stated that, at the regional level, there were worries about the impact of the anticipated rise in interest rates and increased volatility. Corporate debt was also high in many emerging markets, and there had been a slowdown in infrastructure spending in some countries as a result of debt concerns. Public-private partnerships were important for infrastructure, and legal and regulatory frameworks were being strengthened in each region. The demand for expertise and capacity-building in that regard was high, as the transactions alone could be very complex and there was often a lack of faith among counterparts. The challenge for fiscal policy was not only to generate more tax revenue but also to share the proceeds of growth more equitably, which was a big piece of the work done by the regional commissions in support of their Members. The Task Force had also raised the issue of potential benefits from regional tax organizations, and ESCAP was beginning work in that area.

V. Ministerial round tables

Ministerial round table 1

17. Neven Mimica, Commissioner of International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission, reaffirmed the commitment of the European Union to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and highlighted its forthcoming pledge to the new Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, he highlighted three priorities. First, development partners should meet their ODA targets, which was especially crucial for least developed countries and fragile States. Second, private sector investment should be increased and targeted to where it was most needed. Third, domestic resource mobilization needed to be supported, using an approach that emphasized "collect more, spend better" alongside efforts to stem tax evasion and tax avoidance, as well as illicit financial flows. The European Commission was focusing on capacity development and targeted investment. Its new external investment plan combined flexible financial guarantees, technical assistance and policy guidance to improve the investment climate and support viable projects; it had allocated about €900 million for blended finance operations in sub-Saharan Africa. He referred to the launch of the report on "Investing in sustainable

development", which explained how the European Union was implementing the Addis Ababa Action Agenda under a common strategy.

18. Sahar Nasr, Minister of Investment and International Cooperation of Egypt, summarized the various reforms under way to attract sustainable investment and mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development. Empowering women and youth was a cross-cutting element for all actions. Egypt was making major policy and institutional reforms to create sustainable employment and foster entrepreneurship. A key pillar of those reforms was strengthening governance through policies to counter money-laundering and corruption. The reforms were aimed at facilitating greater access to microfinance, mortgages and the financial system more broadly, prioritizing people at the centre. The reforms were being implemented together with social programmes, such as conditional cash transfers and school feeding programmes, to build resilience to adverse impacts.

19. Mohamed Asim, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives, highlighted the importance of the forum, especially in supporting sustainable growth in small island developing States. Maldives was trying to strengthen policies and efforts to mobilize resources but faced limitations and constraints. The United Nations could play an important role in promoting an enabling global environment, particularly with regard to lending terms, that improved chances for small island developing States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Inequality continued to be a major impediment to ending poverty, and international cooperation and the multilateral trading system were critical in that regard. To enact the transformative changes required to attract the necessary resources, the private sector should play a bigger role and the public sector needed to improve efforts to incentivize its contributions.

20. Oleksandr Danyliuk, Minister of Finance of Ukraine, described how the country had more than 1.6 million internally displaced persons, which had created an unforeseen demand for national resources. Inflation had recently skyrocketed and the national currency had been devalued three times. Those and other factors had emerged as major constraints on the country's capacity to finance its development priorities. One key priority had been the implementation of measures to counter corruption, in which civil society played a key role. The Government had also introduced structural reforms in health, energy and educational systems, and a budget and monitoring mechanisms were in place to support implementation. The mobilization of internal resources, including through the national tax system and technological solutions, had been prioritized. That experience had shown that reforms should be carried out sooner rather than later, and that working closely with the international financial institutions was critical, but insufficient if national will and leadership were not in charge.

21. Karin Finkelston, Vice-President of Partnerships, Communication and Outreach of the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group, said that the 2018 Spring Meetings had been historic and that the agreed capital increase would enable work across public and private partnerships to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. The World Bank was now working to support developing countries with regard to two challenges: rising public debt and domestic resource mobilization. Those efforts should be complemented by mobilizing the private sector, through leveraging the Bank's limited capital for resources from the markets. The Bank's policies helped countries to reduce risk by developing investment policies and reforms, reducing subsidies and putting insurance in place. To assess its work, it was developing tools to measure the impact of private investment in countries.

22. Norbert Barthle, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, highlighted the steps Germany had taken through the Group of Twenty (G-20) and European Union platforms in support of its partners to achieve sustainable development. Ongoing adjustments to

the global financial and trading system were key elements of that work. Structural reforms were critical, alongside efforts to increase resilience to climate risks and other shocks. He noted that Germany sought to avoid the negative consequences of the impact of financing tools and interactions among those tools. Similarly, capital invested in sustainable development should not have a negative impact on debt sustainability. He underscored the importance of ODA and its catalytic role in mobilizing resources. The creation of new partnerships was also a priority, with the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation and the G-20 partnership with Africa being two useful examples. He concluded by stating that the forum on financing for development follow-up, along with the high-level political forum on sustainable development, could help to strengthen the common international vision of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

23. Somchith Inthamith, Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, recognized the importance of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and highlighted the challenges faced by many developing countries, including those in vulnerable situations, with regard to eradicating poverty. He called for development partners to meet their ODA commitments and emphasized the need for debtors and creditors to work closely with developing countries to achieve long-term debt sustainability. He underscored the importance of enacting policy reforms at the international and national levels to support countries through the transition. The Lao People's Democratic Republic was taking action towards graduation from least developed country status; its status would be decided at the next review by the Committee for Development Policy.

24. Elissa Golberg, Assistant Deputy Minister for Strategic Policy at Global Affairs Canada, noted that the forum on financing for development follow-up was ideal for bringing all actors together to discuss resource mobilization challenges faced by the countries themselves, as well as obstacles to engagement by other actors. She underscored the importance of ODA for least developed countries and fragile countries, where internal domestic mobilization was challenging. Traditional donors needed to continue to think about the full range of instruments available for crowding in resources and partnerships. Blended finance was not a panacea but could be useful in certain contexts. Its use should be closely analysed using a strong evidence base so that it could be channelled where and when it made the most sense. The role of government was key to reducing the risk for private investment and creating a climate for businesses. Innovation and inclusion were important for growth and investment, and considerations related to gender equality and diversity should be fully integrated into development policies. The work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development was critical for pursuing the next steps and continuing to build on progress.

25. Pio Wennubst, Assistant Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, recommended a focused review of lessons learned on financing specific sectors if progress was to be made. Concerning the water sector, he said that there were various risks that had made long-term investment difficult. Experience had shown that a systemic, multisectoral approach to water, whether national or transboundary, had led to better financing operations. Blended finance options were often at a pilot stage and not sufficiently well designed to attract the appropriate investment. He noted that the comparative advantages offered by wealth management and pension fund management were not well reflected in current investment packages and should be better integrated without distorting the fundamental nature of those packages.

26. Mpho Parks Tau, President of United Cities and Local Governments, highlighted the importance of collaboration between central Governments and local authorities and noted that such collaboration should be based on not only transfer mechanisms

but also more effective spending in line with local realities. Growing inequalities between regions and territories were pushing some areas and population groups within countries towards marginalization.

27. During the interactive discussion, the experience of middle-income countries in Latin America was highlighted with respect to the region's relatively low taxation levels and informal economies. A concurrent challenge was the limited access to international finance on concessional terms since many countries in the region did not meet per capita income requirements.

Ministerial round table 2

28. Bambang Brodjonegoro, Minister of National Development Planning of Indonesia, noted that, while global economic growth provided opportunities, Indonesia faced bottlenecks in infrastructure and energy. To make progress, investment and partnerships with the private sector were critical, which required work by Governments to improve the investment climate. He emphasized his country's strong political commitment to maintaining an open international trading system with a fair and effective dispute resolution mechanism under WTO. Mr. Brodjonegoro also called for strengthening the mobilization of domestic resources and noted that Islamic finance could make a large contribution to sustainable development finance.

29. Khurelbaatar Chimed, Minister of Finance of Mongolia, noted that Mongolia benefited greatly from global growth and international investment but had encountered challenges from a sharp drop in commodity prices and reduced private investment. He stated that the national experience of Mongolia had demonstrated the importance of sound economic policies, including savings and economic diversification, as well as the risks of high debt levels. He underlined the importance of bolstering tax systems and mobilizing domestic revenue.

30. Teresa Ribeiro, Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Portugal, noted that per capita growth rates and further reforms would likely be insufficient to address the setbacks caused by the 2008 financial crisis. Smart ODA would be important to ensure that it could leverage greater progress. In that regard, Ms. Ribeiro emphasized the need to bring in the private sector to contribute to sustainable development and the reforms to government policies that were needed to achieve it. She underscored the importance of the multilateral trading system, reforms to the international financial architecture and measures to ensure debt sustainability.

31. Ulrika Modéer, State Secretary to the Minister for International Development Cooperation of Sweden, gave examples of new programmes and partnerships that were being implemented in Sweden, using a whole-of-government approach, including the introduction of green bonds, the expansion of guarantee instruments and the launch of the Stockholm Sustainable Finance Centre. She described the efforts of the Swedish steel industry to improve its environmental sustainability and the holding in May 2018 of a conference on building tax capacity. Ms. Modéer reiterated the commitment of Sweden commitment to providing ODA equivalent to 1 per cent of gross national income.

32. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, described three critical points that countries needed to address to achieve structural transformation: tax, infrastructure and trade. He indicated that strengthened domestic revenue mobilization must go together with enhanced international tax cooperation and in that regard pointed to the outcome of the First Global Conference of the Platform for Collaboration on Tax, hosted by the United Nations in February 2018. In addition, he emphasized the importance of infrastructure investment, which he noted would require both domestic public investment and the involvement of the

private sector. Finally, he stated that trade would be critical and that new technology provided opportunities for non-traditional routes to development, including by helping developing countries increase non-traditional exports.

33. Mohammad Khaza'ie, Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Head of the Organization for Investment and Economic and Technical Assistance of the Islamic Republic of Iran, highlighted the need for redoubled efforts towards poverty reduction and more broad-based and stable global economic growth. He underscored that coercive economic measures taken against developing countries were violations of international law. He further argued that international financial institutions should not be politicized and that a global partnership for sustainable development that involved all parties and countries was necessary. He concluded by underlining the continued important role to be played by development finance institutions in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

34. Kayula Siame, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry of Zambia, stated that least developed countries were benefiting from global growth and that Zambia had maintained macroeconomic stability despite the fall in global commodity prices. She noted the importance of investment for least developed countries and said that Zambia had emphasized infrastructure development. She described her country's plans and programmes, and the importance of a revenue strategy and a strong tax system to pay for investment needs. Finally, she stressed that distortions to international trade, including disguised obstacles to trade, should be removed.

35. Sergio Londoño Zurek, Director General of the Presidential Cooperation Agency of Colombia, described the importance of the peace process for Colombia and the need to build peace and pursue sustainable development in tandem. He stressed the importance of monitoring progress and the need for transparent partnerships with the private sector, such as in infrastructure financing. Colombia had created special economic zones, provided tax incentives and promoted tourism in all parts of the country. He argued that ODA remained important even for middle-income countries and especially for those emerging from conflict.

36. Rémy Rioux, Chief Executive Officer of the Agence Française de Développement, emphasized four key trends: the creation of new development finance institutions, the increased concessionality of development bank lending, the emphasis on the private sector and strengthened coalitions between the public and private sector. He noted efforts to improve coordination and effectiveness in aid agencies across Europe. He concluded by stressing that national development banks should serve as a third pillar for sustainable development investment, alongside the multilateral development banks and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

Ministerial round table 3

37. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, Minister of Finance of Bangladesh, noted that the national budget had increased steadily in recent years. Foreign assistance remained important and represented about 10 per cent of the budget. One of the major challenges was to implement the budget evenly throughout the year. Oftentimes, disbursements of funds were rushed at the end of the year with detrimental effects on public service delivery. Through targeted efforts, the Government had made significant progress in disbursing a larger portion of the budget in a timely and effective manner.

38. Mustafa Mastoor, Minister of Economy of Afghanistan, pointed out that, aside from the health sector, progress had been slow and uneven. While $85 billion in

foreign assistance had been committed to Afghanistan in the previous six years, 52 per cent of the population lived under the national poverty line and 44 per cent experienced food insecurity. The unemployment rate stood at 24 per cent and imports exceeded exports by a factor of more than 10. It was therefore crucial to increase aid effectiveness through more targeted interventions in promising sectors. He underlined the importance of supporting the Government in programme development rather than providing project support. He emphasized the need to mobilize private sector resources through ODA and to promote peer learning among least developed countries.

39. Régis Immongault, Minister of Economy, Forecasting and Sustainable Development Programming of Gabon, emphasized that the Government had improved the efficiency of its tax system and broadened the tax base through the introduction of a land tax. It had also prioritized a stable macroeconomic environment to increase investor confidence. Nevertheless, domestic actions often faced systemic constraints at the international level. Rising protectionism in trade would reduce income for the poorest countries and jeopardize development gains. He called for international support measures to enhance debt sustainability, promote innovative financing mechanisms, reduce ODA conditionalities and allow the poorest countries to access and fully realize the gains from new technologies.

40. Batyr Bazarov, Minister of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan, highlighted that the Sustainable Development Goals had been fully mainstreamed into the national sustainable development strategy of Turkmenistan through a five-year partnership programme with the United Nations. The country was focused on creating a market economy based on economic growth, social well-being and environmental protection. Both domestic and external resources were important. Turkmenistan continued to optimize its use of natural resources while increasing economic diversification, and had initiated new infrastructure projects.

41. Fabio Kanczuk, Secretary of Economic Policy at the Ministry of Finance of Brazil, underscored that Brazil was coming out of its worst recession in decades, which made it important to put in place preventative measures to avert future crises. Its strategy to increase investment in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals harnessed public and private finance in a complementary manner. Innovative instruments to tap private finance included green bonds, which would raise funds to finance or refinance projects or assets that had positive environmental or climate impacts, as well as performance bonds, which were common in the construction sector and ensured payment in the event that a contractor failed to fully execute the contract. Public spending had increased substantially over recent years; however, reductions in inequality were still needed.

42. Admasu Nebebe, State Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation of Ethiopia, emphasized the need for a long-term strategy on realizing the Sustainable Development Goals. He highlighted the need for investing in a more effective tax system through smart tax policies and better institutions. Ethiopia was pursuing efforts to increase domestic and international private sector investment by promoting financial inclusion, investing in human capital, strengthening its financial system and establishing industrial parks to attract foreign direct investment. Ethiopia had also put in place a law on public-private partnerships to guide joint public-private investments towards achieving the Goals. Mr. Nebebe stressed the importance of using ODA to leverage domestic resources for sustainable development.

43. Väino Reinart, Under-Secretary of Economic and Development Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, stressed that information and communications technology had helped Estonia significantly improve the efficiency, cost effectiveness and transparency of its tax system. Estonia was now rated first on the tax

competitiveness index of OECD and twelfth in the ease of doing business index by the World Bank. Peer learning was an important mechanism to help other countries harness the benefits of information and communications technology in domestic resource mobilization. In that context, Estonia had established an e-governance academy to share best practices and experiences with other interested countries.

44. Noel González Segura, Director-General of Planning and Policies for International Development Cooperation at the Agencia Mexicana de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo in Mexico, highlighted that Mexico had introduced federal laws to spur competitiveness and increase investment in priority sectors like infrastructure and technology. Because of structural reforms in the economy, quality and long-term investment had increased and small and medium-sized enterprises enjoyed greater access to finance through more competitive pricing. He emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation in tax matters, including through international forums like the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters.

45. Lidy Nacpil, Coordinator of the Jubilee South Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development, called for debt relief measures for small island developing States that had suffered from the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season. She argued for the need to separate climate finance from discussion of ODA, pointing to the stipulation in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that climate finance was an obligation from developed to developing countries. She called on countries to consider taxing the richest 1 per cent to generate more resources for sustainable development and establishing a global tax body under the aegis of the United Nations.

46. During the interactive discussion, some participants called for caution in the implementation of new and innovative financing mechanisms. Some of those instruments might increase the debt burden of developing countries and reduce the availability of resources to finance the Sustainable Development Goals in the long term. More progress was needed for the prevention and resolution of debt crises, including through advancing discussions within the United Nations on guidelines for responsible borrowing and lending, as well as solutions to restructure sovereign debt.

Ministerial round table 4

47. George Gyan Baffuor, Minister of Planning of Ghana, stated that Ghana had prioritized moving beyond aid by focusing on two key areas: increased domestic resource mobilization and the strengthening of regulatory frameworks to facilitate private investment. To increase domestic resources, Ghana was pursuing several measures, including a national identification programme and an excise tax stamp policy. Ghana recognized the need to develop investable projects and had implemented programmes to incentivize business activities. Mr. Baffuor concluded by noting that the forum contributed to greater policy coherence for sustainable development.

48. Hadizatou Rosine Coulibaly, Minister of Economy, Finance and Development of Burkina Faso, stated that Burkina Faso was committed to significant domestic resource mobilization and had assessed its tax system, identified gaps and developed a strategic plan to modernize its collection practices, with the aim of increasing its tax-to-GDP ratio to between 14 and 20 per cent. Digital technologies were facilitating improved domestic resource mobilization. Looking ahead, it had plans to carry out a census on property ownership to improve the accuracy of property tax assessments and had improved its ease of doing business by creating a streamlined system for entrepreneurs. Its law on public-private partnerships benefited from lessons learned from other countries. It was also looking at how to use pension funds and long-term

investors to finance development. Overall, rural development remained a key consideration, given the number of rural-dwelling poor.

49. Mohamed Osman Suliman Al-Rikabi, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning of the Sudan, reported that the national development plan of the Sudan included an economic reform programme through 2019. To build resilience to shocks, it was working on mobilizing domestic resources, including through the creation monitoring mechanisms, modern tax collection methods, increased efficiency of government institutions and improved transparency. The country faced ongoing challenges, including costly loans, the repercussions of sanctions and security-related issues. Given its fragility, he called for greater support, including through the provision of ODA.

50. Qahhorzoda Fayziddin, Minister of Finance of Tajikistan, highlighted the priorities of Tajikistan in the Sustainable Development Goal context as energy, food and nutrition security, water security, climate change and productive employment. The country had made great progress in reducing poverty, but eradication and reaching the furthest behind would prove difficult. The country currently had 70 investment projects under way with development partners working towards priority areas. He emphasized that investment in large regional infrastructure projects should be on a concessional basis, with a long-term orientation.

51. Patricia Chinamasa, Minister of Finance and Economic Development of Zimbabwe, reported that Zimbabwe had set the goal of becoming a middle-income country by 2030. Many financing challenges stemmed from the impact of economic sanctions against the country, and Zimbabwe was pursuing the normalization of relations with relevant countries and improved prospects for resource mobilization. It had also prioritized the addressing of debt burdens, poor infrastructure and economic informality. Various policy and reform measures were being put in place in support of national efforts, including by creating a public-private partnership policy, combating illicit financial flows, improving ease-of-doing-business measures and implementing stronger tax systems. It hoped to build data capacities to support those initiatives.

52. Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, noted that the international community had weathered the global financial crisis, but the experience had resulted in overcaution in some areas. Long-term dedication, informed risk-taking, innovation and market creation need to be strengthened going forward. As fiscal and monetary stimulus faded soon, the private sector should redeploy assets towards sustainable development. Given the trillions of dollars that could be unlocked for the Sustainable Development Goals, leveraging and risk mitigation were critical. Norway prioritized the protection of the multilateral trade system. Greater efforts on tax aid were needed. Greater attention also needed to be paid to the looming debt crisis and continued illicit financial flows.

53. Bary Emmanuel Rafatrolaza, State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, welcomed stronger international tax cooperation and suggested that the United Nations could evaluate bilateral tax agreements in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government of Madagascar had implemented new legislation on public-private partnerships, specifically focused on renewable energy. It continued to improve its business environment and was pursuing a new growth frontier: the "blue" maritime economy. The forthcoming adoption of the national strategic document for development cooperation would contribute to improvements in the quality of aid and Sustainable Development Goal results.

54. Nim Dorji, Finance Secretary of Bhutan, reported that Bhutan had experienced strong growth and had fully integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into its national development plans. It had met the criteria for graduation from least

developed country status, and planned to graduate from that status by 2021. Bhutan was currently making attempts to strengthen tax administration and broaden the tax base. It prioritized integrating the informal economy into the tax system. Looking ahead, partnerships would be critical. Bhutan was also trying to make foreign direct investment and public-private partnerships more attractive, including through improved rules and frameworks.

55. Miguel Ángel Estuardo Moir Sandoval, Secretary of Planning of Guatemala, said that, given the focus of the current architecture for financing and development cooperation on partnerships, rather than ODA, the country increasingly emphasized effectiveness and quality. He encouraged innovative thinking on criteria and access to concessional finance. Currently, much development assistance did not sufficiently take advantage of national and local institutions. South-South cooperation continued to be useful, especially for sharing lessons about avoiding common pitfalls. Trade was a tool for local development and the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, and could improve competitiveness; therefore, aid-for-trade should be strengthened.

56. Michael Baldinger, Head of Sustainable and Impact Investing of UBS, said that the Sustainable Development Goals were a road map to solve global sustainability challenges and that private capital was crucial. Given the estimated resources needed for the Goals, innovative approaches to investment were needed. Sustainable investments currently amounted to more than SwF 1 trillion. Aligning financial objectives to the Goals offered new opportunities to improve sustainability and make an impact. UBS strived to use global resources to drive innovation and champion local initiatives.

57. During the interactive discussion, civil society representatives drew attention to the challenges posed by public-private partnerships in developing countries, which sometimes resulted in the costly privatization of essential public services, and the need for more concerted efforts to curtail illicit financial flows.

VI. Launch of the Joint Policy Fund to Advance the 2030 Agenda through Integrated Policy

58. The Deputy Secretary-General launched the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which builds on the vision laid out by the Secretary-General on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. An overarching objective is the need for the United Nations development system to work more effectively as a true system, with a consequent shift from competition to collaboration and the delivery of shared results. The Joint Fund is one component of the larger funding compact for the development system. It is a global, multi-partner pooled fund aimed at supporting Governments to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The Fund also builds on successful experiences of the past, such as "Delivering as one" and the Millennium Development Goals Fund, and is designed to leverage significant financial flows. It will provide "the muscle" for a new generation of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. The Deputy Secretary-General called on Member States to support the Fund. Germany, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the European Commission announced their contributions to the Fund at the launch. Rwanda underlined the importance of using the fund as a catalyst for resources aimed at the implementation of the Goals, and in support of country priorities.

VII. Interactive dialogue with intergovernmental bodies of major institutional stakeholders

59. The 2018 interactive dialogue, chaired by the President of the Economic and Social Council and moderated by Zain Asher of CNN, addressed two themes: (a) disaster risk and resilience, and (b) taxation in the digitalized economy.

60. In opening the dialogue, the President of the Economic and Social Council emphasized that the growing human and economic costs of disasters had demonstrated the potential of such disasters to set back development progress and leave the most vulnerable behind. There were also increasing concerns around the rules and regulations that governed the shift to digital economies.

61. Tudor Ulianovschi, President of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD, noted that multilateralism was key to addressing major challenges such as weak economic growth, climate change and threats to privacy. The concept that development is universal was a major innovation of the 2030 Agenda. UNCTAD was focused on turning such transformative thinking and commitments into action and impacts.

62. Lesetja Kganyago, Chair of the International Monetary and Financial Committee of IMF, stressed that the current upswing in the global economy provided a window of opportunity for reform. Building resilience was a priority, given the wide range of vulnerabilities across countries. He identified the declining levels of trust among key partners (States, business and societies) needed for sustainable globalization as a fundamental challenge to progress. In that context, he referred briefly to global trade, emphasizing that trade cooperation always led to better results, with the poor standing to lose the most from trade conflicts.

63. On behalf of the Chair of the Development Committee, Dominique Bichara, Director of the Corporate Secretariat of the World Bank, said that the capital increase agreed at the 2018 Spring Meetings would allow the Bank to more effectively deliver development results in a financially sustainable manner and ensure that funds were strategically deployed where most needed. Four priorities for the World Bank had been identified by the Committee: staying engaged with all clients; leading on the global public goods agenda; mobilizing capital and creating markets; and improving effectiveness and internal operations.

64. Merza Hasan, Dean of the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank Group pointed to the forum as an important platform for bringing together institutional stakeholders to discuss progress on its responsibilities and commitments to the 2030 Agenda. He indicated that Bank was thinking about how to use ODA to unleash more capital from markets. The International Finance Corporation was making sure that it was adequately financed and capitalized. The International Development Association package was especially focused on climate and fragility. Other innovations and new tools, such as facilities for pandemics, droughts and refugees, had been developed. Work was ongoing on global concessional financing for middle-income countries that had been affected by refugee inflows. The Bank should partner with the United Nations throughout those and other efforts to mobilize resources.

65. Aleksei Mozhin, Dean of the Executive Board of IMF, described how the Fund was supporting countries in addressing disaster risk and digitalizing economies and taxation. That included a programme for reinforcing resilience and new work to address the challenges associated with digitalization in areas such as productivity, labour and financial markets, and fiscal and monetary policy. He highlighted the ongoing work with partners on tax issues through the Platform for Collaboration on

Tax. The Fund would also conduct a rigorous and candid assessment of excessive global imbalances and do a stocktaking of capital flow measures.

66. Four speakers led the discussions on disaster risk and resilience.[1] It was emphasized that substantially increasing the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in place by 2030 was essential to ensure the transition from managing disasters to reducing disaster risks. It required moving from ex post ad hoc responses towards ex ante prevention and risk reduction. Models for growth needed to be built on resilient infrastructure and risk-informed investment. The World Bank was using development policy lending as an instrument to incentivize Governments to have frameworks in place for disaster risk management plans. It also incorporated disaster- and climate-related risks in its national partnership plans and projects. At the same time, country-specific risk mitigation and disaster preparedness plans that fit into a macrofiscal framework and had the ability to assess progress was critical. The new IMF climate change policy assessment tool, which was being used in some island States to assess and make recommendations on general preparedness for climate change while identifying areas for capacity-building, was a welcome development. Sustainability frameworks for low-income countries should include tailored stress tests for improving preparedness. Future success would require countries to adjust fiscal planning and priorities and necessitate a shift in donor support from ex post to ex ante interventions. It was important to invest in early warning systems, national strategies for disaster risk reduction and integrated national financing frameworks that were multisectoral and that ensured the resilience of development achievements. Greater risk-informed investments were essential and building capacities with regard to risk modelling and mapping were especially useful in that regard.

67. Representatives[2] of the World Bank, IMF, the United Nations and OECD shared their views on taxation in the digitalized economy. Digitalization could enhance tax compliance and, through digital payment systems, Government capacities for improving tax flows could be strengthened. The digitalized economy also increased services to taxpayers. At the same time, there were concerns about difficulties in taxing digital activities. The digital economy raised questions about the need for a targeted versus a comprehensive approach to dealing with the larger tax architecture. There was consensus that rules and standard-setting to establish some agreed norms were needed, as unilateral actions would lead only to fragmentation and distortion and have a disproportionately negative impact on low-income countries. There was now broad consensus that value added tax should be paid, in principle, where consumption took place. The recent report of OECD on that issue had identified the need for an international solution by 2020, even if there might be a case for quick action through interim measures. The Platform for Collaboration on Tax was a useful tool for cooperation. Developing countries formed an integral part of the inclusive framework on base erosion and profit shifting, which provided a forum towards a comprehensive approach.

[1] Aparna Subramani, Executive Director for India, World Bank Group; Nancy Horsman, Executive Director for Canada, IMF; Jerry Matthews Matjila (South Africa), Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council; and Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction.

[2] Masaaki Kaizuka, Executive Director for Japan, IMF; Hervé De Villeroché, Executive Director for France, World Bank Group; Francisco Duarte Lopes, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations; and Martin Kreienbaum, Chair of the Committee on Fiscal Affairs, OECD.

VIII. Expert segment

Round table A: domestic public resources

68. Participants highlighted the importance of coherent fiscal policies that ensured spending priorities were consistent with long-term, sustainable development objectives. Critical for supporting such coherence were broad-based political support that transcended political cycles; a whole-of-government approach to taxation, including consideration of the municipal level; efficient revenue administration; and a consistent legal framework. Medium-term revenue strategies were essential for laying out a road map for the implementation of legal and policy reforms that would raise additional revenues, as well as administrative reforms to ensure efficient tax collection.

69. Stronger capacity-building for domestic resource mobilization was needed and should be demand-driven and aligned to national sustainable development priorities and needs. Greater capacities to analyse and assess various tax policies were a priority. There was also a call for enhanced efforts by international organizations to support developing countries in building resilient institutions and more efficient administrations, which would help to strengthen resource mobilization efforts. The Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters and the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes were highlighted as two good examples of multilateral support in that area.

70. International tax cooperation could help to address the perceived tension between creating an enabling investment environment and protecting the tax base of countries. It could help to promote a shared understanding and prevent a "race to the bottom", especially in a fast-changing global economy where trends such as digitalization posed challenges to and created opportunities for all countries. Some participants emphasized that the United Nations was ideally placed to convene inclusive multilateral discussions on international tax standard-setting, given its universal membership and resources such as the Committee of Experts.

Round table B: domestic and international private business and finance

71. The discussion highlighted a range of cases demonstrating that sustainable investments were profitable. Representatives from the private sector noted that there was still work to be done to show wary investors that investments related to the Sustainable Development Goals, and impact investment broadly, could produce good returns. Some investors were using the Goals as a foundation for their investment strategies, including by investing significantly in green and sustainable bonds from multilateral development banks. It was suggested that one way of making progress in that area was to consider the different actors within private finance separately, as their incentives could vary and they would therefore benefit from more tailored strategies.

72. A fundamental component of unlocking private business and financial resources for the Sustainable Development Goals was to strengthen the overall investment climate within countries. One priority in many developing country contexts was the need to enhance transparency, develop legal frameworks and clarify risk allocation for investors. Private investments could be attracted through risk-reducing instruments, such as first-loss tranches, and through better data and information services that bolstered local markets and increased financial services. In landlocked least developed countries, where the demand for interregional connectivity and improved infrastructure was high, regional development banks had supported national

efforts by providing mechanisms such as guarantee schemes, syndicated loans and co-financing arrangements.

73. A balanced approach to improving both the quality and quantity of investment was emphasized, and public-private partnerships were highlighted as one mechanism deserving greater attention and quality assurance. Concerted efforts to build enabling environments and reduce risks for investment should not be equated with broad deregulation and lowered labour standards. Development finance institutions had an important role to play in enforcing rigorous environmental and social safeguards, and it was suggested that such institutions could work more closely with trade unions to monitor implementation.

Round table C: trade, science, technology, innovation and capacity-building

74. Participants strongly agreed on the importance of a universal, rules-based, open and fair multilateral trading system for making progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Both multilateral and national measures were key to ensuring a more even distribution of gains from trade. They stressed the importance of analysing the different impacts of trade measures on different sectors and groups, whether in the micro-, small and medium-sized enterprise sector or for women workers and/or those employed in the informal economy. The International Labour Organization and UNCTAD were identified as having unique skill sets in some of the areas identified, and their recent strengthened engagement with WTO was welcomed.

75. Some countries were already prioritizing the inclusion of labour and environmental standards in all new trade agreements. Such efforts should be more widespread and scaled up. Impact assessments could also be strengthened further by incorporating an analysis of how particular trade measures would have an impact on achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Involving civil society and vulnerable groups in broad and transparent consultation processes for new trade agreements could ensure greater sustainability.

76. Regarding the role of science, technology and innovation, participants highlighted new opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises, including those led by women entrepreneurs, such as connection to markets, new employment opportunities and enhanced financial inclusion. At the same time, participants were cognizant of potential risks posed by rapid advances in science and technology, such as the evolution of digital divides into much larger development divides, owing to the uneven distribution of access and adaptation of digital technologies across and within countries. The commercialization of technology could present an obstacle to bringing innovations to scale, particularly in small developing countries.

77. Technology-driven automation also threatened job security and could erode labour standards through the increased power of the gig economy. While potential labour market disruptions were acknowledged, several participants expressed optimism about the possible generation of new and different jobs in line with past technological revolutions. National policies for steering the direction of rapid technological change to produce inclusive economic and social benefits were essential. With respect to the challenge of "brain drain" from developing countries, there was a suggestion to establish stronger international support for tertiary education in developing countries. In addition, increased investment in research and development, the dedication of a larger share of ODA flows, and capacity building could support progress in that area.

Round table D: international development cooperation

78. International development cooperation would continue to play a key role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. ODA was recognized as particularly important in low-income countries and least developed countries, where it often formed a significant proportion of a country's financial resources. Given the size of the financing gap for the Goals and limited ODA, integrated strategies for mobilizing domestic resources and private finance were needed. Blended finance could be effective, but it was not appropriate in all contexts. A stronger evidence base was needed, and further work should be done to collect data on it. Work was being done to develop a methodology to capture all the flows from all providers, regardless of concessionality levels.

79. The curtailment of access to concessional finance as graduation from the least developed country category occurred was mentioned as a concern. Some considered that process to be too abrupt, and there was a call for ensuring that countries in transition did not lose access to essential resources. Participants also raised the issues of challenges to accessing concessional finance in relation to the "middle-income country trap", economic growth amid high rates of poverty and economic growth in weak political and governance contexts. OECD reported that it was working on methodologies for reinstating ODA because of structural factors and pointed to the need for separate measures for countries that had already graduated but faced dramatic events that required ODA.

Round table E: debt and systemic issues

80. There was shared concern over the rapid rise of debt in many developing countries in recent years. Debt financing had allowed for infrastructure and other key investments in the Sustainable Development Goals. Nevertheless, growing debt levels, especially from private and non-concessional sources, had made many developing countries vulnerable to deteriorations in the global economic environment, such as rising interest rates. Climate-related disasters also contributed to debt vulnerabilities in some small island developing States. In addition, the build-up in corporate debt in many emerging economies could end up threatening public balance sheets, as well as causing a loss of momentum around financial sector regulatory reform.

81. Several options for policy responses were discussed. There continued to be a need for access to concessional financing, increases in domestic resource mobilization, more transparency and a better understanding of existing debt vulnerabilities. The response of the international community to disasters had improved, but much more progress was needed with regard to preparedness. In the ex post space, both private and public initiatives, such as quick disbursement mechanisms and parametric insurance, had led to improved disaster response. State-contingent debt instruments, which adjusted or delayed debt-servicing requirements in response to a predetermined event, held great potential. At the same time, it must be recognized that such instruments would not be sufficient to address a solvency crisis. Gaps remained in the international architecture for dealing with sovereign debt resolution. In the absence of political consensus on a treaty-based mechanism, improvements to official creditor coordination, market-based and soft-law approaches had been taken forward. Another proposal mentioned during the discussion was a regional debt relief initiative for the eastern Caribbean, building on the experience of the initiative for heavily indebted poor countries.

Expert discussion: encouraging foreign investment to countries in special situations

82. The discussion focused on the commitment contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda by the international community to foster investment promotion regimes for least developed countries and countries in special situations. There were many impediments that reduced investment in least developed countries, including poor infrastructure, an unfavourable investment climate and a lack of capacity. Despite the continued need, foreign direct investment continued to bypass least developed countries and countries in special situations. Blended finance was mentioned as one tool to leverage investment; however, it was mostly concentrated in middle-income countries and its suitability in various contexts was questioned.

83. Political stability and strong legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks were agreed to be effective tools for promoting investments. It was suggested that domestic law should remain the primary source for ensuring responsible business conduct, while international rules on investor conduct could supplement domestic legal frameworks, such as those developed by OECD and UNCTAD. Legal capacities in those areas were also critical, especially in the context of the transition of least developed countries towards graduation. The investment support programme for least developed countries was highlighted as a useful public-private partnership.

84. Specific policy options and related actions that could be taken at the national level were discussed. For example, creating ecosystems for investment, productivity and entrepreneurship, including through upgraded infrastructure and transport networks, as well as establishing special economic zones and industrial parks, could be catalysts for foreign direct investment. Special investment agencies could also play a key role by providing one-stop services for access to information, business registration and liaison services for joint ventures. Investment reforms to lower the cost of doing business are critical in that regard.

Expert discussion: gender equality and the empowerment of women

85. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were deeply rooted in the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, but efforts needed to be intensified to overcome persistent gender inequalities in a wide range of areas, including wage inequality, job discrimination, unpaid work and a higher likelihood of being employed in the informal, or unregulated, economy. The ongoing contraction of public expenditure in many countries often eroded public services and social protection measures, on which women often depended, including health, education and childcare services.

86. Increasing progressive taxation could contribute to equality and support investment in infrastructure critical for women's empowerment. It was noted that tax systems around the world had been built around the traditional economy of gender, which was no longer fit for purpose. Specifically, tax systems had developed historically in line with the notion that women performed unpaid work and could be subsumed into the fiscal space of their husbands. It was argued that most domestic tax systems had still not been reformed to remove systemic unfairness towards women, and the increased importance of value-added tax in many countries also had regressive effects on poor women. In addition, tax evasion and avoidance reduced the funds that could be used to advance the Sustainable Development Goals and fostered greater inequalities.

87. Apart from taxation issues, policy approaches to address challenges of gender inequality had included the establishment of legal frameworks that put affirmative action for women's empowerment at their centre. For instance, public planning and budgets could integrate the gender perspective, and the recent upgrading of target c of Sustainable Development Goal 5, on policies for the empowerment of women, from a tier 3 to a tier 2 indicator underlined the growing importance of that issue. In addition, all public policies should be aligned with strengthening gender equality. It was critical to foster the inclusion of women in economic and financial systems, including through investments in financial inclusion and training, as well as participation in cooperatives.

IX. General debate

88. Many Member States reported on their progress in fully integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans, strategies and budgets. Domestic resources, mobilized by strong national commitment, were widely agreed to be critical, but their impact would be limited without an improved global enabling environment and global partnership for sustainable development. Some developing countries referred to new challenges brought about by innovations such as the digitalized economy and financial technology, as well as other rapidly advancing technologies with unclear effects on developing countries (e.g. artificial intelligence). Those trends underlined the importance of international cooperation and capacity-building in those fast-changing areas and their impact on economic and financial systems.

89. There were repeated calls for ODA commitments to be fulfilled. While there was broad agreement that ODA was integral to financing the Sustainable Development Goals, some countries emphasized the need for diversification through "more comprehensive" approaches in the financing space and consideration of the full means of implementation.

90. There was strong emphasis of the need for targeted attention and approaches for financing and resource mobilization for countries in special situations, in line with their respective challenges. Least developed countries underlined their concern about the weak growth trends in many least developed countries, which put them off track for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 by 2030, and related trends in ODA flows, for which the 0.2 per cent commitment was not being met. Enhanced support was required as least developed countries approached the graduation threshold. Small island developing States advocated for a revision of eligibility criteria for concessional financing based, among other things, on the predominance of losses induced by natural disasters faced in small island developing States each year. Gross income level as a measure was no longer adequate, and they welcomed efforts by some multilateral development banks to innovate in that area. Conflict-affected States highlighted the need for approaches that were more sensitive to conflict and complexity and that could lend a helping hand, including through risk guarantees, to encourage private financial investment. Middle-income countries also reported on the challenges they faced with regard to all three dimensions of sustainable development, owing to rising inequalities despite the improvement in macroeconomic indicators, and difficulties of access to long-term capital for financing the Goals, especially for recently graduated countries. South-South cooperation continued to be a complement to, rather than a substitute for, traditional development cooperation.

91. Concerns emerged regarding the impact of climate change on sustainable development and its interlinkages with progress on financing for development. Given the step-change needed in climate finance, some States would have liked for more

attention to have been paid to that topic within the context of financing for development discussions. Others emphasized that climate finance was critical and should be treated as additional to other financing for development flows.

92. Member States recognized the role of the private sector as an essential partner for sustainable development. It was noted that discussions needed to urgently move from whether private finance could be mobilized to how to get it to where it was most needed. The emphasis on changing incentives from short-term to long-term sustainable investment was welcomed by many delegations. Countries reported on efforts to improve domestic enabling environments for private investment, including through foreign direct investment and the implementation of standards and frameworks for public-private partnerships, in alignment with national sustainable development priorities. Innovative financing was also highlighted as an important tool. At the same time, Member States expressed caution about ensuring the necessary balance between the roles of public and private finance for sustainable development.

93. The centrality of capacity-building in developing medium-term resource mobilization strategies, within a holistic approach to sustainable development, was also emphasized. Gender-responsive budgeting was identified as an area in which greater efforts could potentially be made.

94. There was a strong call for strengthened international cooperation on tax and fiscal matters. Some Member States recommended fully upgrading the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters into an intergovernmental body with experts. The Platform for Collaboration on Tax was welcomed as a useful, coordinated approach to supporting tax systems.

95. The important role of international trade for development and as an important means for achieving the 2030 Agenda was clearly highlighted by most Member States. In general, they underlined the importance of the multilateral trading system while expressing concern about a growing tendency towards unilateral and protectionist rhetoric and measures. Noting the declining trends in the share of least developed countries in global trade since 2011, it was suggested that growing trade deficits in those countries could be reversed alongside better-directed aid for trade. Member States recalled the risk of a renewed cycle of debt crises. There was a call for renewed international efforts towards greater debt sustainability.

96. Member States expressed appreciation to the co-facilitators (Jamaica and Portugal) for their efforts in facilitating a consensus outcome document of the forum. They welcomed the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development as an effective coordination effort, and many commended its analysis and recommendations as a good basis for measuring progress and addressing gaps in implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

X. Presentation and adoption of the intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations

97. The President of the Economic and Social Council thanked Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations, and Francisco Duarte Lopes, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations, for bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion. Ambassador Lopes, on behalf of the co-facilitators, presented the intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations. The outcome document was adopted by consensus. The Group of 77 and China, the European Union, the United States of America, Switzerland and Mexico explained their positions at the adoption of the document.

XI. Closing of the forum on financing for development follow-up

98. The forum adopted by consensus its report (E/FFDF/2018/3), which contained the intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations. The 2018 forum was closed by the President of the Economic and Social Council.

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Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

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Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution 2017/30, entitled "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan", the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of that resolution. The Assembly, in resolution 72/240 entitled "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources", also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its seventy-third session. The present report, which was prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, has been submitted in compliance with the above-mentioned resolutions of the Council and the Assembly.

The report covers persistent Israeli practices and policies, particularly those which are in violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and which affect the social and economic conditions of people living under its military occupation.

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The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia would like to express its appreciation for the contributions from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the World Food Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Health Organization.

I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2017/30, and the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/240, expressed concerns about the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as the exploitation, damage, loss or depletion or endangerment of natural resources by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

2. The present note provides information on relevant developments with regard to the foregoing.

II. Occupied Palestinian Territory

Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

3. Palestinians in the occupied territory are subject to a complex combination of Israeli and Palestinian legal systems. In the West Bank, Israeli domestic law is applied extraterritorially to Israeli settlers, while Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law in addition to the Palestinian legal system. The resulting differentiation is particularly problematic as regards criminal matters. Lower human rights standards are applied to Palestinian suspects and defendants compared with Israeli suspects and defendants. The application of two different legal systems in the same territory, on the sole basis of nationality or origin, is inherently discriminatory and also violates the principle of equality before the law, which is central to the right to fair trial. The application of Israeli domestic law to settlers and of Israeli military law to Palestinians in the West Bank also raises concerns as to the obligation of the occupying Power to respect the laws in force in the territory it occupies, unless it is absolutely prevented from doing so.

4. Israeli planning and zoning policies, especially in East Jerusalem and Area C, which constitutes 60 per cent of the West Bank and in which 5 to 10 per cent of Palestinians reside, under full Israeli control, has been deemed restrictive, discriminatory and incompatible with international law.[1] Palestinians can plan and build legally on only 13 per cent of East Jerusalem. After the allocation of land for settlements, the demarcation of closed military zones and the takeover of land for the "barrier", only 30 per cent of Area C remains available for Palestinians. The Israeli Civil Administration permits construction by Palestinians on 0.4 per cent of Area C (see A/72/564, para. 32). Palestinians living there are often faced with nearly insurmountable Israeli obstacles to obtaining construction permits. The rate of approval of building permit applications for Palestinians in Area C during the period 2007–2016 was less than 4 per cent.[2]

Excessive use of force and settler violence

5. Concerns persist regarding international standards, in particular for civilian demonstrators and stone throwers in the West Bank, and in access-restricted areas in the Gaza Strip. A general lack of accountability for violations by security and military

[1] See A/HRC/34/38, paras. 24, 39 and 40; A/72/90-E/2017/71, para. 4; A/72/564, para. 32; and State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Preliminary results of the population, housing and establishments census 2017" (Ramallah, 2018), available from www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2364-1.pdf.

[2] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview: Occupied Palestinian Territory" (November 2017), endnote 22.

personnel exacerbates the situation, especially given that several incidents strongly suggest unlawful killing.[3] On 30 March 2018, 18 Palestinians were killed and more than 1,400 injured by the Israeli army, the majority during demonstrations close to the fence separating Gaza from Israel;[4] approximately 800 of the injuries reportedly resulted from live ammunition.[5]

6. Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, 80 Palestinian civilians, including 3 women and 17 children, were killed by the Israeli army, the security apparatus or settlers, while 12,188 Palestinian civilians were injured, including 419 women and girls and 2,095 children.[6] A number of the casualties had been involved or allegedly involved in attacks against Israelis. During the same period, 16 Israelis were killed and 119 were injured.

7. On 7 March 2018, the Israeli Knesset passed an amendment to the Counter-Terrorism Law granting police commanders the authority to withhold the bodies of Palestinians killed while committing an attack against Israelis, or suspected of doing so, and to set conditions for returning bodies for burial if it is determined that there is reason to fear that, as a result of the funeral, a terrorist attack might be committed, lives might be at risk or the funeral would be used as a platform to praise terror attacks.[7]

Settler-related violence

8. Palestinians continued to suffer from settler violence and harassment during the reporting period. Settler violence continued to impede the ability of Palestinian population affected to exercise numerous human rights (see A/HRC/37/43, para. 23). After steadily declining since 2013, violent incidents between Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Palestinians sharply increased in 2017 compared with 2016. There were 180 attacks by settlers reported between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018.[6]

9. An increase was recorded in the indictment rate in files opened regarding settler violence between 2014 and 2017,[8] driven at least in part by increased law enforcement and prosecution efforts. Nevertheless, Israel continued to fail to do its utmost to investigate cases of settler violence and prosecute perpetrators (see A/HRC/37/43, para. 23).

10. Palestinians victims of crimes perpetrated by Israelis in the West Bank often choose not to file complaints with the Israeli Police; such offences are usually not investigated.[9] Cases in which settlers attacked Palestinians and their property in the presence of, or even accompanied by, Israeli security forces continued to be documented (see A/72/564, paras. 17–22).

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[3] See A/72/565, paras. 6–16 and 51; see also Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2017/18: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London, 2018), p. 207.

[4] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory" (March 2018).

[5] International Committee of the Red Cross, "The troubling (and rising) human toll in Gaza" (5 April 2018). Available from www.icrc.org/en/document/gaza-troubling-human-toll.

[6] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, monthly figures database, available from www.ochaopt.org/content/monthly-figures (accessed on 17 March 2018).

[7] Knesset, "Knesset passes law granting police the authority to hold terrorists' bodies", press release (8 March 2018). Available from www.knesset.gov.il/spokesman/eng/PR_eng.asp?PRID=13804.

[8] Yesh Din, "Data sheet, December 2017: law enforcement on Israeli civilians in the West Bank–Yesh Din monitoring update 2005–2017", p. 4. Available from www.yesh-din.org/en/data-sheet-december-2017-law-enforcement-israeli-civilians-west-bank; and "Increase in settler violence during the first half of 2017" in Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory" (July 2017), available from www.ochaopt.org/content/increase-settler-violence-during-first-half-2017.

[9] Ibid, p. 2.

Detention and ill-treatment

11. As of the end of February 2018, at least 5,890 Palestinians were being held as "security detainees" or serving a sentence in Israeli prisons,[10] including 356 children[11] and 61 women.[12] Grave concerns over the detention of Palestinian children remain, since such detention must be used as a last resort and for the shortest period possible.[13]

12. As of the end of February 2018, 427 Palestinians were being held in administrative detention, including 4 children.[14] Between 1967 and 2014, the Israeli authorities issued more than 50,000 administrative detention orders. As of July 2017, there were at least 449 administrative detainees in Israeli prisons who were being held without charge or trial for an indefinite period of time.[15] Resort to administrative detention must be consistent with the obligations of Israel under international human rights law and with the exceptional nature of internment permitted under article 78 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

13. Most Palestinian prisoners and detainees are held in facilities outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory. International humanitarian law forbids the transfer of protected persons, including those accused of offences, to the territory of the occupying Power. This practice makes it difficult or impossible for families to visit the detainees (see A/72/565, para. 38).

14. As stated last year in a note by the Secretary-General, the Committee against Torture expressed concern about a number of Israeli practices towards Palestinian detainees, including minors. Such practices include deprivation of basic legal safeguards for administrative detainees, isolation and solitary confinement of detainees, including minors, punishment and ill-treatment of hunger strikers, torture or ill-treatment of Palestinian children and the hindering of visits of relatives for child prisoners. The Committee also expressed concern about information it had received to the effect that there was no proper accountability for torture and ill-treatment (see A/72/90-E/2017/71, para. 18; see also CAT/C/ISR/CO/5, paras. 22, 24, 26, 28 and 30). No criminal investigations have been opened into the more than 1,000 complaints of torture and ill-treatment filed since 2001.[16] Complaints of torture or ill-treatment involve the Israel Security Agency in particular. Although the number of complaints involving the Agency has quadrupled since June 2013, none has led to a criminal investigation (see A/HRC/WG.6/29/ISR/2, para. 23; see also A/HRC/31/40, paras. 47 and 48; A/HRC/34/38, paras. 48–50; and A/71/364, paras. 58–60). Nevertheless, five indictments were issued against Israeli soldiers suspected of having harmed Palestinian detainees while they were handcuffed and in custody.[17]

[10] Excluding those held in military prisons.

[11] B'Tselem, statistics on Palestinians in the custody of the Israeli security forces database, available from www.btselem.org/index.php/statistics/detainees_and_prisoners (accessed on 3 April 2018).

[12] Addameer, Statistics database, available from www.addameer.org/statistics (accessed on 8 March 2018).

[13] Information received from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

[14] B'Tselem, statistics on administrative detention database, available from www.btselem.org/index.php/administrative_detention/statistics (accessed on 3 April 2018).

[15] Addameer, "Ten facts on administrative detention" (12 February 2014). Available from www.addameer.org/publications/ten-facts-administrative-detention.

[16] Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2017/18*, p. 209; see also A/HRC/37/42.

[17] Yesh Din, "Data sheet, January 2017: law enforcement on Israeli soldiers suspected of harming Palestinians — figures for 2015", p.11. Available from https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/files.yesh-din.org/2016+נתונים+מצח+דצמבר+דף/YeshDin+-+Data+1.17++-+English.pdf.

Destruction and confiscation of property and infrastructure

15. Continued demolitions by Israel and the resulting forced evictions of Palestinians are key factors contributing to a coercive environment in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in which specific circumstances may leave no other choice to individuals or communities but to leave.[18] Demolitions and the resulting forced evictions often constitute grave violations of human rights law (see A/72/564, para. 49) and international humanitarian law, which prohibits the destruction or confiscation of private property (see A/HRC/37/43, para. 33).

16. Between April 2017 and March 2018, the Israeli authorities demolished more than 310 Palestinian structures, a decline from the previous reporting period. The total number of demolished structures is 5,413 since 2009, including 2,009 residential and 917 donor-funded structures.[19] 2017 witnessed the second largest number of Israeli demolitions of Palestinian structures in East Jerusalem since 2000, although lower than in 2016, when 190 demolitions were recorded.[20]

17. Israeli authorities cite the lack of building permits, which are nearly impossible to obtain, to justify the demolition of Palestinian homes (see A/72/564, paras. 23–25). By the end of 2017, there were more than 13,000 demolition orders pending against Palestinian property in Area C.[21]

18. During the reporting period, Israeli authorities carried out nine punitive demolitions[19] of family homes of Palestinians suspected of having carried out attacks, a measure that may amount to collective punishment prohibited under international humanitarian law and international human rights law (see A/72/565, paras. 18–27).

19. Furthermore, as of September 2017, 66 cases of demolitions and confiscation related to agricultural structures or assets, and 39 cases related to food assistance, had been recorded for 2017.[22]

20. Confiscation of property by Israel as a punitive measure against neighbours of Palestinians suspected of having attacked Israelis may also amount to collective punishment (see A/72/565, paras. 23–27). Over one third of Area C is formally designated as public land (referred to as "State land" by Israel). The vast majority of "State land" declarations took place before the start of the Oslo peace process in the early 1990s. It is estimated that between 750 km^2 and 900 km^2 were declared "State land" by Israel between 1979 and 1992. "State land" has been allocated exclusively for use by Israel and its citizens, rather than for the benefit of the local population.

Population displacement

21. There is continued concern that the combination of State-sanctioned land seizures, retroactive legalization of settler outposts, demolition of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures, denial of Palestinian building permits, restrictions on movement and access to livelihoods, and settler violence and a lack of accountability for such violence to contribute to the creation of a coercive environment in areas under full Israeli control, propelling Palestinians to move out of certain parts of Area C and East Jerusalem. Involuntary displacement and relocation to alternative

[18] See A/72/564, para. 27; see also Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", annex I (protection).

[19] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, demolitions and displacement database. See www.ochaopt.org/page/demolition-system (accessed on 12 March 2018).

[20] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory" (December 2017).

[21] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", endnote 22.

[22] Ibid, p. 11.

residential areas, as a result of such policies, may amount to forcible transfer if it is carried out without the free and informed consent of the individuals who relocate, in violation of the obligations of Israel under international humanitarian and human rights law. Forcible transfer is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and amounts to a war crime.[23]

22. During the reporting period, 448 Palestinians were displaced after home demolitions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, marking a sharp decline compared to 1,263 and 1,162 people displaced during the two previous reporting periods, respectively. The total number of Palestinians displaced as a result of home demolitions since 2009 amounts to 8,681 people, including 4,528 children.[19]

23. As a result of the planning regime, at least one third of all Palestinian households in East Jerusalem lack a building permit issued by Israel, which places 100,000 residents at risk of displacement.[20]

24. This and the strict residency regime for East Jerusalem and restrictions on family reunification involving residents of East Jerusalem and other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory contribute to the displacement of Jerusalemite Palestinians (see A/HRC/37/43, paras. 55 and 63).

25. Between 1967 and May 2017, Israel revoked the Jerusalem residency status of 14,595 Palestinians.[24] On 7 March 2018, the Israeli Knesset passed an amendment to the Entry into Israel Law that allows the Interior Minister to revoke the permanent residency of Palestinians in East Jerusalem who have committed terrorist activities, treason or espionage, as defined under Israeli law, or "acts that constitute breach of trust against the State of Israel".[25]

26. Lawsuits based on a claim of previous Jewish ownership have also been a frequent strategy for settler organizations to acquire property in East Jerusalem. Since 2004, there has been an increase in settler takeover in neighbourhoods surrounding the Old City, through purchase and claims of prior ownership before 1948 (see A/HRC/37/43, para. 40). With proceedings under way, 180 Palestinian families were at risk of eviction from their homes in East Jerusalem in 2017 as a result of legal action by settlers.[26]

27. Displacement of Jerusalemite Palestinians is evidenced by the growing population of East Jerusalem neighbourhoods behind the "barrier" in the West Bank, where rent is lower and restrictions on housing expansion fewer. It is the only place where Palestinians with residency status in Jerusalem can live with spouses from the West Bank without losing their status. These neighbourhoods suffer from lack of essential services and basic infrastructure, however (see A/HRC/37/43, para. 56). Palestinians living in those neighbourhoods also have to pass through Israeli checkpoints to enter Jerusalem.

28. An additional factor contributing to the creation of a coercive environment in Area C is the plan to evict and relocate Bedouin and herder communities, including approximately 7,500 persons belonging to 46 Bedouin communities, most of them

[23] See A/72/564, paras. 27 and 36; see also A/HRC/34/38, paras. 27–28; A/HRC/31/43, paras. 44, 46 and 50–60; A/HRC/24/30, paras. 28–29; A/68/513, paras. 30–34; A/HRC/25/38, paras. 11–20; A/HRC/28/80, para. 24; and A/69/348, para. 13.

[24] Association for Civil Rights in Israel, "East Jerusalem: facts and figures 2017" (21 May 2017).

[25] Knesset, "Knesset passes legislation authorizing interior minister to revoke permanent residency status over involvement in terrorism", press release (7 March 2018). Available from www.knesset.gov.il/spokesman/eng/PR_eng.asp?PRID=13803.

[26] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", pp. 9 and 10.

refugees, who are at particular risk (ibid., paras. 24 and 25; see also A/72/564, para. 36).

29. In Gaza, by November 2017, approximately 23,500 Palestinians remained displaced as a result of the 2014 conflict owing to Israeli restrictions on the entry of reconstruction materials and limited reconstruction funding.[27]

Israeli settlement activity

30. Israeli settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory violates a number of Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), in which the Council reaffirmed that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. Such settlements also have a serious impact on the human rights of the Palestinian people (see A/72/564, para. 4).

31. The Israeli settler population has more than doubled since the Oslo Accords in 1993: by the end of 2016, there were almost 600,000 persons living in more than 227 settlements, 97 of which had been established without formal authorization by the Government of Israel and labelled as "outposts".[28] Israeli settlements and areas associated with them cover 40 per cent of the total area of the West Bank.[29]

32. In recent years, the growth rate of the Israeli settler population has surpassed that of both the overall population of Israel and the Palestinian population in the West Bank.[30] Policies of the Government of Israel support population growth in the settlements through State-led public services, incentives and preferential treatment (see A/72/90-E/2017/71 and A/71/86-E/2016/13). The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights indicated that Israeli policies regarding the settlements amounted to the "transfer by Israel of its population into the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which is prohibited under international humanitarian law".[31]

33. Israeli settlements remain one of the drivers of displacement and forced evictions. Measures that accompany the construction of settlements often can hinder the mobility of Palestinians, including access to their own agricultural lands. Palestinians living in the vicinity of settlements are subjected to an increase in tensions and violence in view of the presence of not only settlers, but also Israeli soldiers and security forces to ensure the safety of settlers. They may also suffer from the collective punishment imposed on them in response to any attack against Israelis (see A/HRC/37/43, paras. 15 and 45–54).

34. In May 2017, Israeli authorities formally approved the establishment of a new settlement in Area C for the first time since 1992, notwithstanding the establishment of other settlements through the retroactive legalization of outposts. The new settlement in Area C was established for settlers evicted from outposts.[32]

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[27] Ibid., p. 7.

[28] B'Tselem, "Settlements" (11 November 2017), available from www.btselem.org/settlements; and Peace Now, "Settlement watch" database, available from http://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data (accessed on 14 March 2018).

[29] B'Tselem, "Settlements".

[30] Information received from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; and B'Tselem, "Settlements".

[31] See A/HRC/37/43, para. 69; and Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 49 (6).

[32] See A/72/564, para. 6; see also Peace Now, "Jurisdiction of the new settlement 'Amihai' approved" (30 May 2017), available from http://peacenow.org.il/en/jurisdiction-new-settlement-amihai-approved; and A/HRC/37/43, paras. 8 and 15–17.

35. On 8 February 2017, the Knesset adopted the Law for the Regularization of Settlement in Judea and Samaria, authorizing the continued use of privately owned Palestinian land previously confiscated for settlement purposes. It was the first time that the Knesset had extended its jurisdiction to matters concerning the private property of Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation (see A/72/564, paras. 14 and 15).

Movement and access restrictions

Gaza closure

36. Nearly 2 million Palestinians in Gaza continue to suffer from the impact of successive military escalations, compounded by tightened closures following the takeover by Hamas of the Gaza Strip in 2007. The blockade may amount to collective punishment, which is prohibited by international law (see A/72/565, para. 28). It continues to undermine the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of Palestinians in Gaza (see A/HRC/34/38, para. 29; A/71/364, paras. 28–29; A/70/421, paras. 15–22; and A/HRC/31/44, paras. 40 and 43).

37. Following the 2014 hostilities, Israel introduced measures that eased the movement of people and goods into and out of the Gaza Strip. Nevertheless, the requirement by Israel to coordinate and monitor the entry of crucial raw materials deemed as "dual-use" items, the temporary restrictions on the entry of cement and other materials needed for reconstruction, and the recurring interrogations and confiscations or withdrawals of permits for traders and merchants continue to have a detrimental effect on the economic, social and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip (ibid.).

38. In 2017, the number of exits through the Israeli-controlled Erez crossing dropped by almost 50 per cent compared with the previous year, reaching the lowest rate since 2014. Israeli authorities also required Gaza residents travelling abroad to sign a waiver pledging not to return using the same route for a year, i.e. they would therefore be able to return earlier only through the Rafah crossing. In some cases, travellers were detained at the crossing until they signed the commitment.

39. Moreover, the number of valid permits issued for traders as of December 2017 was 551, compared with between 3,500 and 3,700 in late 2015.[30,33]

40. The approval rate for medical patients allowed through the Erez crossing declined to 54 per cent in 2017, compared with 93 per cent in 2012.[34] In some instances, patients who had been granted permits to cross at Erez for medical treatment outside Gaza were reportedly stopped at the crossing if they did not cooperate when being stopped by Israeli security forces and asked to provide information about armed groups or relatives allegedly affiliated with armed groups in Gaza (see A/72/565, para. 32).

41. The Rafah border crossing largely remained closed by the Egyptian authorities in 2017, except on limited occasions (ibid., para. 29).

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[33] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Gaza crossings: movement of people and goods" database, available from www.ochaopt.org/page/gaza-crossings-movement-people-and-goods; see also Gisha: Legal Center for Freedom of Movement, "2017: tightening of the closure — a round-up of 10 recent measures imposed by Israel further limiting movement of people to and from Gaza", available from www.gisha.org/UserFiles/File/2017Tightening_of_the_closure.pdf; and Amira Hass, "Israel to let Gazans leave via West Bank — as long they don't return for at least 12 months", *Haaretz*, 10 March 2016, available from www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-gaza-residents-allowed-to-travel-as-long-as-they-stay-away-1.5415467.

[34] Information received from the World Health Organization (WHO).

42. The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism has played a crucial role in facilitating the import of construction materials into the Gaza Strip but has been less successful in facilitating the import of "dual-use" materials critical for public works projects.[35] Nevertheless, approvals of large projects and the import of dual-use items have increased in 2018.[36]

43. Citing security concerns, the Israeli army has also enforced "access-restricted areas" along the border fence with Israel and at sea, significantly undermining the right of Palestinian fishermen and farmers to a livelihood (see A/HRC/34/38, para. 29; A/70/421, paras. 30–38; and A/HRC/31/44, para. 43). Officially, the Israeli authorities impose a "no go" area of up to 100 m from the perimeter fence and up to 200 m for heavy machinery. Nevertheless, humanitarian organizations have reported that in practice up to 300 m from the perimeter fence is considered by most farmers as a "no go" area and up to 1,000 m is considered a "high risk" area.[37]

44. While sea restrictions have varied, Israel, citing security concerns and attempts to smuggle weapons by sea and conduct attacks using boats,[38] imposes a fishing limit at 6 nautical miles, less than one third of the 20 nautical miles allocated for fishing under the Oslo Accords. The limit is expanded to 9 nautical miles during the sardine season.[39]

Movement restrictions in the West Bank

45. Administrative, bureaucratic and physical constraints hamper the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank and undermine economic activity, access to basic services and the delivery of aid and relief, and undermine freedom of movement (see A/HRC/31/44, paras. 12–21).

46. Israel continues to construct the "barrier" in the West Bank. About 65 per cent of its route has been completed. Approximately 85 per cent of the current 712 km planned route lies within the West Bank rather than along the 1949 Armistice Line (the Green Line),[40] contrary to the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which states that "the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated regime, are contrary to international law" (see A/ES-10/273 and A/ES-10/273/Corr.1). Another 53 km (7.5 per cent) of the "barrier" is under construction. If construction is completed along the entire planned route, about 9.4 per cent of the West Bank would be isolated between the wall and the Green Line and up to 25,000 Palestinians could be added to the 11,000 Palestinians already isolated in the seam zone[41] as of November 2017, many of whom are consequently encountering difficulties in accessing the rest of the West Bank.[42]

47. According to an Israeli local government audit, 140,000 Palestinians live in the eight neighbourhoods within the borders of the Jerusalem municipality as defined by

[35] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 7.
[36] Information received from the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.
[37] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 5.
[38] Judah Ari Gross, "Shin Bet, IDF thwart Islamic Jihad attack on navy boats off Gaza coast", *Times of Israel*, 4 April 2018. Available from www.timesofisrael.com/shin-bet-idf-thwart-islamic-jihad-attack-on-navy-boats-off-gaza-coast.
[39] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory", special edition, May–June 2017.
[40] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Occupied Palestinian Territory: humanitarian facts and figures" (December 2017), p. 10.
[41] The area that lies between the wall and the Armistice Line of 1949.
[42] B'Tselem, "The separation barrier" (11 November 2017). Available from www.btselem.org/separation_barrier.

the Israeli authorities but are separated from the rest of East Jerusalem by the "barrier". These neighbourhoods suffer from a lack of basic infrastructure, municipal services and law enforcement, and from poor living conditions, although the communities themselves are under the authority of the municipality of Jerusalem and pay municipal taxes. The "barrier" also impedes freedom of movement and access to education and municipal services in these neighbourhoods (see A/HRC/37/43, paras. 38 and 58).

48. Regarding the impact of the "barrier" on the health situation, in 2017, 12 per cent of patient applications and 18 per cent of patient companion applications from the West Bank to access East Jerusalem or Israel were denied. Direct access for ambulances remains problematic, with ambulances delayed for security checks. About 90 per cent of the 2,125 Palestinian Red Crescent Society ambulances entering Jerusalem from other parts of the West Bank every year are forced to transfer patients to another ambulance at checkpoints, which delays transit.[43]

49. Moreover, by the end of January 2017 in a number of regions in the West Bank, about 60 km of West Bank roads were designated for exclusive, or near-exclusive, use by Israeli citizens and off limits to Palestinians.[44] Firing zones for military training purposes in the West Bank cover approximately 17.5 per cent of its total area and 29 per cent of Area C, also putting constraints on movement (see A/72/564, para. 41).

50. Farmers in 90 Palestinian communities own land within or in close proximity to 56 Israeli settlements. Those farmers can access their land only by means of "prior coordination" with the Israeli authorities, which usually grant access for only a limited number of days during the harvest and ploughing seasons. During the 2017 olive harvest season, as in previous years, many Palestinian farmers reported that the time allocated was insufficient, or that the Israeli army did not arrive at the designated time to allow them to access their land, leaving farmers insecure and vulnerable to attacks by settlers.[45]

51. Special permits or "prior coordination" is also required for Palestinian farmers to access farm land designated as "closed" in the seam zone. If they are granted approval, farmers must cross designated gates along the "barrier" or checkpoints in order to reach their land. During the 2017 olive harvest, 76 gates were designated for agricultural access, down from 84 gates the previous year (see paras. 68–72 below).[46]

52. According to a 1997 agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Israeli army maintains control of more than 20 per cent of Hebron city, an area referred to as the H2 zone, which is home to approximately 40,000 Palestinians and a few hundred Israeli settlers living in five settlement compounds. Israelis cannot access H1 areas of Hebron.[47]

53. Israel has implemented severe movement restrictions in the H2 zone and surrounding areas, citing security concerns and attacks by Palestinians. It has erected more than 100 obstacles, including 20 staffed checkpoints, and segregated the settlement area and its surroundings from the rest of the city. This has had an impact on the freedom of movement of the entire Palestinian population of the H2 zone, as well as of other residents of Hebron city. The resulting extraordinary economic, social

[43] Information received from WHO.

[44] Yesh Din, "Through the lens of Israel's interests: the civil administration in the West Bank", position paper (December 2017), p. 14; and A/71/86-E/2016/13, para. 5.

[45] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory" (November 2017).

[46] Ibid.

[47] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "The humanitarian impact of Israeli settlements in Hebron city" (February 2018).

and humanitarian challenges have created displacement pressures for Palestinians living there.[48] Movement restrictions, attacks and intimidation by Israeli settlers, and a lack of adequate law enforcement concerning violent settlers, have resulted in the displacement of Palestinians from their homes in Hebron city.[47] Between April 2017 and January 2018, 252 access-related incidents in the West Bank were reported by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Those incidents resulted in the loss of an estimated 1,222 individual workdays or 9,175 work-hours. This affects the delivery of education, health and relief services to the Palestine refugees.[49]

Exploitation, endangerment and depletion of Palestinian natural resources

Water

54. Water shortages continue to disrupt daily life and impede development interventions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. About 1.8 million Palestinians are in need of humanitarian water, sanitation and hygiene assistance.[50]

55. Owing to the restrictive planning regime, communities in Area C have limited ability to repair, rehabilitate or construct basic water and sanitation infrastructure at the community or household level, resulting in insufficient water for drinking, domestic use and livestock consumption in many communities. Altogether, in Israeli-controlled Area C and Palestinian-controlled Areas A and B, and also as a result of the poor state of the pipelines linking Palestinian communities in the West Bank and of the water grids within Palestinian cities and villages, one third of all water supplied through the grid to the Palestinians is lost through leakage.[51]

56. Twenty-two per cent of the West Bank Palestinian population — 649,000 people — suffer from either lack of access to water or poor quality of water. Around 156,000 people are either not connected to a water network or receive water less than once a week.[52]

57. In Area C, around 95,000 people receive less than 50 litres of water per capita per day, half of the minimum recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).[53] Those include around 20,000 people living in Bedouin or herding communities in dwellings that the Israeli authorities consider "illegal" and who have access to only about 30 litres per day at a cost 10 times higher than through the network.[54]

58. Palestinians are also forced to rely on pumping and storing water at exorbitant cost, as they are not allowed to use the water pipes that run in close proximity to their villages that supply the settlements.[55]

59. Between January and November 2017, Israeli authorities demolished or seized 19 structures related to water, sanitation and hygiene in Area C of the West Bank,

[48] Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, "Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee" (20 March 2018).

[49] Information received from UNRWA.

[50] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 27.

[51] Ibid., pp. 11 and 27.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., p. 29.

[54] Information received from UNICEF.

[55] Association for Civil Rights in Israel, "Between the green line and the red line", in "50 years: a State without borders — people without human rights", available from www.acri.org.il/campaigns/50yearsen.

including cisterns, water pipes and mobile latrines, claiming that they had been installed without permits.[56]

60. In East Jerusalem, only 59 per cent of Palestinian residents are connected legally to the water grid. Palestinians suffer from substandard water and sewage connections owing to the ongoing lack of proper planning and allocation of resources for their neighbourhoods.[57]

61. Ongoing deficits in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector affect all 2 million people in the Gaza Strip.[56,58] About 40 per cent of water supplied for domestic use is lost on the way to consumers owing to the poor condition of the infrastructure.[59]

62. Wastewater contamination and overpumping has rendered more than 95 per cent of the water extracted from the Gaza coastal aquifer unfit for human consumption. At its present rate of deterioration, the damage to the aquifer is expected to be "irreversible" by 2020. Increased electricity cuts have exacerbated the situation. About 90 per cent of people in Gaza rely on purchasing desalinated water from private companies, which entails heavy financial burdens on already impoverished families and increases health risks owing to potential contamination.[60]

63. Merely 10.4 per cent of the population in Gaza has access to improved drinking water sources,[61] with less than 50 litres of water available per person per day, half the minimum international standard.[62] No single person obtains the WHO recommended amount of water of 100 litres per capita per day.

64. According to 2016 figures from the Palestinian Water Authority, 98 million cubic metres of water were supplied for domestic use in Gaza, from different sources. Only 18 per cent of the water supplied from those sources was safe for drinking.[63]

65. Recent efforts are being made to address some of the water challenges, notably the resumption of the meetings of the Joint Water Committee and the start of the North Gaza Emergency Sewage Treatment project for the West Bank and Gaza. Some progress has also been made on the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal project.

Pollution

66. The deterioration in infrastructure and electricity supply to Gaza has had severe consequences for the operation of water treatment facilities, wastewater pumping stations and drinkable/piped water.[64] A quarter of the population is not connected to the sewage network and pollution levels are now four times higher than the

[56] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", pp. 28 and 29. Water, sanitation and hygiene vulnerability is based on community needs assessment conducted by Action Against Hunger and Gruppo di Volontariato Civile, in cooperation with the Palestinian Water Authority and the Palestinian Hydrology Group.

[57] Association for Civil Rights in Israel, "East Jerusalem: facts and figures 2017", pp. 4–5.

[58] United Nations, "Gaza ten years later: United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" (July 2017).

[59] B'Tselem, "Water crisis" (11 November 2017). Available from www.btselem.org/water.

[60] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", pp. 8 and 27.

[61] Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), based on the 2014 multiple indicator cluster survey.

[62] Information received from UNICEF.

[63] Information received from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

[64] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 28, based on Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Gaza crisis: early warning indicators — June 2017, available from www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/gaza_indicators_final.pdf.

environmental health standard.[65] About 108 million litres of raw or poorly treated wastewater are discharged into the Mediterranean Sea from Gaza every day and 73 per cent of the shoreline is contaminated by sewage.[58]

67. Official Palestinian sources have claimed that practices by Israeli authorities and settlers, including the illegal transfer of hazardous waste to the West Bank and the allocation of parts of the Jordan Valley to an Israeli dumpsite devoted to industrial waste, have gravely damaged Palestinian agricultural land, health, animals and biodiversity.[66]

Access to agricultural land

68. The ability of Palestinians to access and utilize agricultural land is compromised by various factors, including movement restrictions, land confiscations and settler violence.

69. Restrictions hamper access by Palestinians to lands in the seam zone and in the vicinity of settlements, impeding essential year-round agricultural activities and affecting productivity and value in the olive sector. For example, the yield of olive trees in the seam zone was reduced by between 55 and 65 per cent over the past four years, compared with similar trees in areas that can be accessed all year round.[45]

70. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development damage database, the uprooting, burning and destruction of trees and other crops, the demolition of the structures and the implementation of stop orders in 2017 resulted in almost $2 million worth of damage.[67]

71. During the 2017 olive harvest season alone (from mid-September until mid-November), a total of 5,582 Palestinian-owned olive trees were damaged by settlers, compared with 1,652 trees during the 2016 season. In one instance, Palestinian farmers reported that, when they were granted permission to visit their land, they found that the produce of 3,200 olive trees had been harvested and stolen.[45]

72. The agricultural sector in Gaza, including farmers, herders, breeders and fishermen, continued to suffer in 2017 from reduced productive capacity and instability of income despite the slow increase in exports since the end of the 2014 hostilities.[68] The restoration of land, irrigation systems, greenhouses, soil fertility and fruit orchards has been slow, resulting in dependency on short-term assistance. Delays in and limitations on the import of products such as pipes and timber imposed under the dual-use regime also have a negative effect on agriculture.[69]

Exploitation of mineral resources

73. Since the 1970s, Israeli companies and corporations have been granted permits to quarry natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. According to official Israeli data from 2010, eight Israeli-owned and eight Palestinian-owned quarries were

[65] Abeer Abu Shawish and Catherine Weibel, "Gaza children face acute water and sanitation crisis" (UNICEF, 1 September 2017). Available from www.unicef.org/wash/oPt_100684.html.

[66] See A/72/90-E/2017/71, para. 61; and Adam Aloni, *Made in Israel: Exploiting Palestinian Land for Treatment of Israeli Waste* (B'Tselem, 2017), conclusions, available from www.btselem.org/publications/summaries/201712_made_in_israel.

[67] Information received from FAO based on data obtained January 2018 from the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

[68] According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in 2017 a total of 2,621 truckloads of goods were transferred out of Gaza compared with 2,132 truckloads in 2016. See Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Gaza crossings: movement of people and goods" database.

[69] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", pp. 35 and 36.

then active in Area C of the West Bank, transferring 94 per cent and 80 per cent of their production to Israel, respectively.[70]

74. According to the Union of Stone and Marble Producers in the West Bank, no new permits have been issued to Palestinian companies to open quarries in Area C since 1994, even though the Oslo Accords provided for this. Moreover, many previous permits have expired. Consequently, only a very small number of quarries are still operating in Area C. Quarry closures have been accompanied by equipment confiscation and fines.[71]

Socioeconomic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

75. Ending the occupation is the single most important factor in enabling Palestinians to chart a successful course to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Around 2.5 million Palestinians, half the population, need humanitarian assistance.[72]

76. The United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has estimated that, owing to the closure, recurrent military operations and internal Palestinian divisions, Gaza will become unliveable by 2020. The team has also estimated that, without international aid and services provided by the United Nations, the Gaza Strip would have been deemed unliveable years ago. In any event, the downward trend remains clear.[58]

77. About 80 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza receive aid, including food assistance that enables scarce cash resources to be spent on other essentials, preventing a further deterioration of food security and livelihood status and reducing the impact of negative coping mechanisms.[73]

Economic performance

78. The economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory deteriorated during 2017. The economy has long suffered from restrictions on movement, access and trade that have kept investment levels extremely low and resulted in an erosion of the productive base. Substantial amounts of financial assistance from the international community have helped mitigate the impact of the restrictions on growth by fuelling public and private consumption. The most recent data revealed growth of 2.4 per cent in 2017, led by the West Bank; in Gaza, it was a mere 0.5 per cent.[74]

79. Estimates of constant-price GDP and GDP per capita for the West Bank in the fourth quarter of 2017 stood at 8.4 per cent and 6.0 per cent, respectively, higher than in the fourth quarter of 2016. For Gaza, however, they were 2.9 per cent and 6.9 per cent lower, respectively.[75] Deterioration of infrastructure, cuts in expenditure by the

[70] Yesh Din, "The great drain: Israeli quarries in the West Bank — high court sanctioned institutionalized theft", position paper (September 2017), introduction.

[71] World Bank, "Area C and the future of the Palestinian economy" (2 October 2013), paras. 30 and 31. Available from openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16686/AUS29220REPLAC0EVISION0January02014.pdf.

[72] United Nations and State of Palestine, "United Nations Development Assistance Framework State of Palestine 2018–2022", situation analysis; and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 17.

[73] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 8.

[74] World Bank, "Economic monitoring report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee: 19 March 2018", chap. I.A.

[75] Information based on ESCWA calculations, based on Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics data, available from www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_29-3-2018-qna-en.pdf.

Palestinian Authority, the continuing closure and internal Palestinian division have affected the growth performance of Gaza.[76]

80. The rates of economic growth in the Occupied Palestinian Territory will be insufficient to remedy economic imbalances and meaningfully improve living standards in the coming years.[77] Post-2014 growth represents a reconstruction boom and catch-up rather than expansion into new economic sectors. The situation is worsened by low public and private investment.

81. Projections by the International Monetary Fund indicate that growth will be 3 per cent in 2018 (2.7 per cent for the West Bank and 4.0 per cent for Gaza),[78] as Israeli restrictions on the movement of goods, labour and persons affect the economy and the financial sector, and as aid inflows remain low. Liquidity constraints and fewer economic buffers are holding back consumption and investment, most acutely in Gaza.[78]

82. Regarding fiscal performance, net revenues were up by 7.3 per cent in the first half of 2017 compared with the same period in 2016. Yet, a budget deficit of 8.4 per cent of GDP is still anticipated for 2017, with falling donor transfers putting further pressure on government finances.[79] Inflation is projected to be 1.2 per cent in 2017, following the deflation of 2016. Macroeconomic indicators are vulnerable to restrictive measures imposed by Israel and other risk factors.

83. Labour market conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remain poor, reflecting demographic pressures, economic stagnation and barriers imposed in connection with the occupation. Across the four quarters of 2017, unemployment rose by 0.4 per cent, 2.1 per cent and 0.8 per cent, and then fell by 1.2 per cent,[80] compared with the same quarters in 2016, peaking at 29.2 per cent in the third quarter. As of the fourth quarter of 2017, the unemployment rate was 19.5 per cent for men, 43 per cent for women and 40.7 per cent for those aged 20–24 years.[81] Unemployment in the West Bank stood at 13.7 per cent, compared with a staggering 42.7 per cent in Gaza. This figure reflects the severe conditions in Gaza and persistent limited opportunities there. Furthermore, workers from Gaza have continued to be prevented from accessing work in Israel since 2007.

84. The poverty rate measured by the national poverty line increased from 26 per cent in 2011 to 29 per cent in 2017 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In Gaza, the rate was very high, at 54 per cent.[82]

85. According to the multidimensional child poverty analysis developed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 65.7 per cent of children are counted as deprived with regard to two or more indicators in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with all children in Gaza deprived with regard to at least two dimensions (see E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/2).

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[76] International Monetary Fund, "West Bank and Gaza: report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee" (31 August 2017).

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Information based on ESCWA calculations, based on Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics data.

[81] State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Labour force survey results fourth quarter (October–December, 2017) round main results", press release (13 February 2018). Available from www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3050.

[82] Preliminary data provided by Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

Food security

86. Common drivers of food vulnerability in the Occupied Palestinian Territory include restrictions imposed by Israel on the movement of goods and people; a stunted economy that results in a persistently high unemployment rate, especially in the Gaza Strip; restrictions on accessing available natural resources; and the inability of the Palestinian Authority to play a regulatory role in locations outside Areas A and B, which constitute the majority of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[83] Poor food utilization as a result of the poor quality of water, sanitation and hygiene, limited access to health care and the declining quality of diets also contribute to food insecurity.

87. Approximately 1.6 million Palestinians (31.5 per cent of the population) are considered food insecure. The prevalence is particularly high in the Gaza Strip, with 40 per cent of households found to be food insecure, more than three times the rate in the West Bank (13 per cent).[84] A food security crisis in the Gaza Strip has been averted only by large-scale humanitarian assistance. More than 70 per cent of residents received international aid in 2016, the bulk of which was food assistance. Yet, approximately half of the Palestinian population suffered from more than one micronutrient deficiency.[85]

88. Palestinian refugees have higher levels of severe and moderate food insecurity than non-refugees. Refugee camps have the highest prevalence of food insecurity. Two in every five households (35.9 per cent) in refugee camps were food insecure in 2016.[86] The food insecurity rate for refugees in the West Bank stood at 15.1 per cent, and 41.3 per cent in the Gaza Strip. [87]

89. The population receiving UNRWA food aid increased from approximately 80,000 people in 2000 to more than 993,000 in 2017. Since March 2017, monthly salaries of Palestinian public employees based in Gaza have been cut by between 30 and 40 per cent, forcing additional families to apply for already stretched UNRWA relief services.[88]

90. The prevalence of food insecurity among female-headed households is higher than among male-headed households. In the Gaza Strip, 46 per cent of female-headed households are severely and moderately insecure, while for male headed households the rate stands at 39 per cent. In the West Bank, these figures are 31 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively.[89]

91. The food insecurity level among Bedouins and herding communities in Area C worsened between 2012 and 2016, with the rate increasing to 61 per cent from 55 per cent. The percentage of food secure households dropped from 20 per cent to 6 per cent during the same period.[90]

[83] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 37.
[84] Information received from FAO; and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 3.
[85] Information received from the World Food Programme (WFP). See also WFP, "Nutrition awareness sessions in Palestine" (November 2016). Available from http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp288670.pdf.
[86] Information received from FAO.
[87] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 34; and information received from WFP.
[88] Information received from UNRWA.
[89] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", pp. 34–35; and information received from FAO.
[90] Information received from WFP.

Education

92. An estimated 490,145 schoolchildren (of which 249,147 were girls) across the Occupied Palestinian Territory face challenges in accessing quality education in a safe, child-friendly environment.[91]

93. A coercive environment prevails for students in the West Bank, caused by violence and harassment and intimidation by Israeli military and security forces, as well as settlers, including attacks and threats against schools, students and teachers.[92] Families resort to leaving their homes to ensure safe access to education for their children elsewhere.[93]

94. In the first half of 2017, there were incidents reported in which Israeli forces fired tear gas and rubber bullets at students and made incursions onto school grounds. An increased number of attacks on schools was recorded in the first half of 2017 in Area C, the Hebron H2 area and East Jerusalem. In the West Bank, children are often subjected to bag and body searches, and at times harassment and detention, notably as they pass through checkpoints. In particular, in some areas students also faced risks of intimidation and violence from settlers while walking past settlements. Students often must walk up to 10 km to get to and from school, putting their safety at risk. Girls in particular have been reported to face a high risk of school dropout owing to the fear of parents for their safety during the school commute. The lack of accountability for the perpetrators of such violations exacerbates these conditions, and the trend of attacks against education is increasing across the West Bank.[94]

95. In East Jerusalem, nearly 2,000 new classrooms are needed to address the needs of the Palestinian population, according to official Israeli data. Local education is impaired by inadequate infrastructure owing to the discriminatory and restrictive planning and zoning regime and by a lack of qualified teachers and other staff, owing to the difficulty for those living in the West Bank of obtaining a permit to access East Jerusalem. Palestinian children attending schools in East Jerusalem have to study a version of the Palestinian curriculum modified by Israel with the reported aim of censoring "incitement".[95]

96. Forty-four Palestinian schools (36 in Area C and 8 in East Jerusalem) serving about 5,000 children are at risk of demolition or seizure because of a lack of Israeli building permits.[96]

97. In the Gaza Strip, two thirds of schools currently operate on double or triple shifts in order to accommodate the number of students. Consequently, the number of learning hours per school day has been reduced to 4.5 (compared with 5.5 in the West Bank).[97]

98. Owing to funding shortfalls and a lack of suitable land to build schools, UNRWA reports that 70.2 per cent of its schools, and their 271,000 students, continue to operate on a double-shift basis, which deprives refugee children of opportunities to engage in the recreational and creative pursuits enjoyed by students of single-shift schools.[98]

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[91] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 38.

[92] Information received from UNICEF; and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 39.

[93] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 39.

[94] Ibid., pp. 38–39.

[95] Information received from UNICEF.

[96] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory" (February 2018).

[97] Information received from UNICEF.

[98] Information received from UNRWA.

99. The unprecedented financial shortfall of UNRWA could have a severe impact on its ability to deliver primary education and schooling services to Palestine refugee students in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Shrinking funding also limits the capacity of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to support quality education in Gaza.[99]

Public health

100. The closure in Gaza coupled with intra-Palestinian division continues to present major challenges to the availability and quality of health care in the Gaza Strip, and to access to health care for patients and health workers residing outside Gaza. Living conditions in Gaza, especially overcrowded and substandard housing, further heighten public health risks associated with the deteriorating water, sanitation and hygiene conditions. The situation is particularly precarious for refugees in camps where the average population density is nearly 40,000 persons per km^2.[100] Nearly 300,000 Palestinian children in Gaza require some form of mental health support or psychosocial intervention.[101]

101. Shortages of medical supplies, machines, drugs and disposables owing to funding shortages, as well as a lack of staff, place 10,000 newborns at risk and contribute to the stagnant 14 per 1,000 neonatal mortality rate. An estimated 140,000 children under the age of 5 in Gaza are suffering from chronic malnutrition and stunting.[102]

102. The energy crisis in Gaza has undermined basic services and compounded serious public health concerns. Hospitals have had to postpone surgeries, discharge patients prematurely and reduce the cleaning of medical facilities.[103] The Beit Hanoun hospital, which normally serves more than 300,000 people in northern Gaza, halted medical services at the end of January 2018 because of a lack of fuel reserves.[96]

103. During 2017, a monthly average of 38 per cent of items on the list of essential medicines and 31 per cent of items of the list of essential medical disposables were reported to be at less than a month's supply in Gaza. Lack of facilities for essential treatments and of adequate investigation technologies drive a reliance on medical referral outside Gaza, especially for oncology. Patients referred out of Gaza are dependent on access via the Erez crossing to facilities in East Jerusalem (53 per cent), Israel (22 per cent) and the West Bank (17 per cent).[104]

104. Health workers are eligible to apply for permits to enter and leave Gaza. In practice, staff face substantial access barriers; and only 61 per cent of those applying for permits to exit or enter Gaza for humanitarian purposes through WHO obtained access in 2017.[105]

105. The fragmentation of the West Bank undermines the right of Palestinians to health. Over 260,000 Palestinians living in Area C, the Hebron H2 area and the seam zone are dependent on humanitarian health care, including approximately 64,000 women of reproductive age, more than 34,000 children under the age of 5 and more

[99] Information received from UNESCO.
[100] Information received from UNRWA.
[101] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 7.
[102] Ibid., p. 31.
[103] Information received from UNICEF.
[104] Information received from WHO.
[105] Ibid., citing its monthly report on referral of patients from the Gaza Strip for December 2017, available from www.emro.who.int/psc/publications-who/monthly-referral-reports.html.

than 85,000 children aged 5–19 years. Other vulnerable groups include disabled and elderly people.[106]

106. Approximately 17 per cent of Palestinians in Area C are served by mobile clinics,[107] whose services are affected by road closures and adverse weather events. About 12 per cent of residents in Area C live in communities situated more than 30 km from a primary health-care clinic and without access to any mobile health clinic.[108]

107. About 30 per cent of refugees living in West Bank camps, where the average population density is around 40,000 persons per km^2, but can reach 130,000-180,000 per km^2 in some camps, face health risks as a result of severe overcrowding and inadequate sewage and water networks.[109]

108. West Bank health facilities also face shortages of medical supplies, notably as a result of funding shortages, with an average of 23 per cent of essential medicines and 19 per cent of essential medical disposables out of stock in West Bank central drug facilities in 2017.[110]

109. Areas of East Jerusalem beyond the "barrier" suffer in view of the unwillingness of Israeli ambulances to service them without police escort, citing security incidents, while Palestinian ambulances are not allowed to cross the "barrier" (see A/HRC/37/43, para. 58). There are pockets of acutely vulnerable communities in East Jerusalem, with approximately 119,000 people suffering from mental health conditions and a lack of essential health and emergency care.[111]

110. A recently published study by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Health, found that around 60 per cent (643 women) of the breast cancer patients who died in 2016 died prematurely owing to various factors, including delayed diagnosis and treatment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The study found that in such cases restrictions on access to the West Bank and Israel were a major factor for Palestinian patients, including patients in Gaza.[112]

III. Occupied Syrian Golan

111. In its resolution 497 (1981), the Security Council decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and without international legal effect, and demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, should rescind forthwith its decision. It determined that all the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention continued to apply to the Syrian territory occupied by Israel since June 1967.

112. An estimated 23,000 Israeli settlers live in 34 illegal settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Government of Israel supports settlement activity through financial incentives (see A/72/564, para. 60). According to the Syrian Arab Republic, 150 Israeli families settle in the Golan each year (see A/HRC/37/40, para. 11), as part of

[106] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 32, based on its health cluster data for 2017 and Vulnerability Profile of Palestinian Communities in Area C project.

[107] See https://public.tableau.com/profile/ocha.opt#!/vizhome/Health-VPP/Dashhealth; and information received from WHO.

[108] Information received from WHO.

[109] Information received from UNRWA.

[110] Information received from WHO.

[111] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018 humanitarian needs overview", p. 30.

[112] UNFPA, *Pathway to Survival: The Story of Breast Cancer in Palestine* (January 2018), available from http://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Breast%20Cancer%20Report%20Final_0.pdf.

attempts to foster the overall integration of the occupied Syrian Golan into Israel and delink it from the Syrian Arab Republic.[113]

113. An estimated 25,000 Syrians reside in five villages and face significant challenges in terms of growth and development, owing in part to restricted access to land and resources (see A/72/564, para. 60). The majority of the native Syrian population reportedly reject Israeli citizenship, hold a form of permanent residency and are considered by the Israeli authorities as having an "undefined" nationality. They are provided with only an Israeli "laissez-passer" if they wish to travel.[114]

114. Permanent residents can apply for full Israeli citizenship but they can also have their permanent residency status revoked following travel and residency abroad for study or work. Around 100 Syrian residents of the occupied Syrian Golan have had their permanent residency status revoked since 1982.[115]

115. Israeli settlers and the army control 95 per cent of the land in the occupied Syrian Golan, leaving only 5 per cent to the Syrian population.[116] The Syrian Arab Republic has reported confiscation by Israel of approximately 28 per cent of the agricultural lands (see A/HRC/37/40, para. 17).

116. Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan face land, housing and development policies established by the Israeli authorities that render it nearly impossible for them to obtain building permits, resulting in overcrowded Syrian villages with strained infrastructure and limited resources (see A/72/564, para. 61). These conditions reportedly force Syrians to build homes without building permits and place them at risk of full or partial demolition and large fines ($55-$85 per m^2).[117]

117. The Syrian Arab Republic reports that Israeli authorities impose disproportionately high taxes on Syrians for requests for utility services (see A/HRC/37/40, para. 14). Furthermore, obstacles to construction hinder the ability of Syrian citizens to benefit from tourism.[118]

118. Israeli settlers also benefit from a disproportionately larger allocation of natural resources, such as clean water (see A/72/564, para. 60; see also A/HRC/28/44, para. 54; and A/HRC/31/43, para. 64).

119. Discriminatory water allocation policies exacerbate the challenges faced by Syrian farmers, including competition from Israeli settlers.[119] Access to the water supply is limited for Syrian farmers owing to the Israeli prohibition on building new wells. Half of the water needed for farming therefore has to be purchased from the Israeli water company.[113]

120. Syrians tend to avoid abandoning agriculture, as there is reportedly a risk that the authorities would confiscate their unused land.[120] Furthermore, according to the Syrian Arab Republic, Israeli authorities restrict Syrian usage of land for farming to 45,000 acres of land, while Israeli settlers are allowed to utilize 350,000 acres of land.

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[113] International Labour Office, *The Situation of Workers of the Occupied Arab Territories* (Geneva, 2017), paras. 121–127.

[114] Al-Marsad, the Arab Centre for Human Rights in the Golan Heights, "Human rights violations committed by the State of Israel in the Occupied Syrian Golan", submission to the United Nations universal periodic review of Israel, June 2017, para. 21.

[115] Ibid., para. 22.

[116] Al-Marsad, the Arab Centre for Human Rights in the Golan Heights, "50 years of the occupation of the Syrian Golan", press release (8 June 2017).

[117] Al-Marsad, the Arab Centre for Human Rights in the Golan Heights, "Human rights violations committed by the State of Israel in the Occupied Syrian Golan", para. 7.

[118] Information received from the International Labour Organization (ILO).

[119] Information received from ILO.

[120] Ibid.

The Syrian Arab Republic further stated that the right of Syrians to work was restricted in the occupied Syrian Golan (see A/HRC/34/37, para. 24).

121. Israeli efforts to clear mines are reported to prioritize areas around Israeli settlements and agricultural land over Syrian residential and agricultural zones, despite the concentration of landmines in the latter.[121]

122. In July 2017, the Ministry of the Interior of Israel announced that, for the first time since 1967, elections would be held on 30 October 2018 in four towns: Buq'ata, Mas'adah, Majdal Shams and Ayn Quniyah.[122]

IV. Conclusion

123. The 51-year Israeli occupation has had a detrimental effect on the social and economic development of the people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. The impact of the prolonged occupation and the policies and practices of Israel on the Palestinian people, society and economy is multilayered and has accumulated negative effects over the years. The funding crisis that UNRWA is facing is another factor that only exacerbates the conditions of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who already live in harsh conditions.

124. A number of Israeli practices and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan are contrary to the relevant Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Some of them may be considered discriminatory. Certain practices may amount to forcible transfer of protected persons, which could amount to a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and others could amount to collective punishment.

125. Adherence to international law is an absolute imperative, ensuring that no party enjoys impunity and securing justice and peace for all those living in the region, including those Palestinians and Syrians living under occupation.

126. Humanitarian and development efforts are key to alleviating the suffering of the Palestinians and Syrians under occupation. Nevertheless, cycles of violence will not end until the roots of such violence are addressed. The United Nations maintains its long-standing position that a lasting and comprehensive peace can be achieved only through a negotiated two-State solution. The Secretary-General will continue to work towards the attainment of this just and lasting peace. It is only by realizing the vision of two States living side-by-side in peace, security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and Palestine, and all final status issues resolved permanently through negotiations, that the legitimate aspirations of both peoples will be achieved.

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[121] Al-Marsad, the Arab Centre for Human Rights in the Golan Heights, "Human rights violations committed by the State of Israel in the Occupied Syrian Golan", para. 13.

[122] Noa Shpigel, "In first since 1967, Druze villages in Israeli Golan Heights to hold democratic elections", *Haaretz*, 8 July 2017. Available from www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-in-first-since-1967-israeli-druze-to-hold-democratic-elections-1.5492306.

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Item 119 of the preliminary list*
Commemoration of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade

Programme of educational outreach on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/7, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on continued action to implement the programme of educational outreach on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery, including actions taken by Member States, as well as the steps taken to enhance public awareness of the *Ark of Return*, the permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade at United Nations Headquarters. This report covers the period 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2018.

Since my previous report (A/70/221), of 31 July 2015, the Department of Public Information organized three commemorations for the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade under themes related to the heritage and culture of the African diaspora; the legacy and contributions of people of African descent; and the triumphs and struggles for freedom and equality.

In addition to the commemorative ceremonies that took place in the General Assembly Hall, the Department organized a series of activities in cooperation with a range of partners, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which included educational briefings, film screenings, discussions, cultural events and exhibitions. Outreach to and the engagement of young people was a particular focus for the Department on such subjects as the lessons of the transatlantic slave trade and the dangers of racism and prejudice. Activities have increased both in number and quality and have been held throughout the year, helping to ensure that the Remember Slavery programme achieves a global impact. The Department also mobilized its network of United Nations Information Centres, made use of social media platforms and strengthened partnerships with Member States and a broad range of civil society actors to raise awareness of the *Ark of Return* and the issues covered by the programme.

* A/73/50.

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I. Introduction

1. On 17 December 2007, the General Assembly, in its resolution 62/122, designated 25 March as the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to collaborate with and build on the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), including its Slave Route Project, to establish a programme of educational outreach to instil in future generations an understanding of the causes, consequences and lessons of the slave trade and to communicate the dangers of racism and prejudice.

3. In its follow-up resolutions, including resolution 70/7, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report at its seventy-third session on continued action to implement the outreach programme and the steps taken to enhance world public awareness of commemorative activities and the *Ark of Return*.

4. The present report is submitted pursuant to those requests.

II. Background

5. Taking place over a 400-year period, the transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced migration in history. The extensive exodus of Africans to many areas of the world was unprecedented in human history. The legacy of that migration remains evident today in the large populations of people of African descent living throughout the Americas. In the past few years, efforts have been made to raise public awareness regarding the transatlantic slave trade and its lasting consequences on societies throughout the world. As part of those efforts, it is essential to recognize the contributions that enslaved people and their descendants have made to the societies that forced them into bondage. Aligning the themes and activities of the Remember Slavery programme with those of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024) affords an opportunity to showcase those contributions and recognize that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected, in order to continue to combat racism and prejudice.

III. Remember Slavery programme

6. Through its programme of activities, the Remember Slavery programme, managed by the Department of Public Information, is aimed at honouring the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade and raising awareness of the dangers of racism and prejudice. Working closely with members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the African Union, the programme organized a series of events throughout the reporting period. In addition to the annual observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade during the week of 25 March, the worldwide commemorative and educational activities, in cooperation with UNESCO, included cultural events, student briefings, panel discussions, exhibitions, film screenings and outreach to media.

7. The yearly themes during the reporting period included: "Remember slavery: celebrating the heritage and culture of the African diaspora and its roots" (2016); "Remember slavery: recognizing the legacy and contributions of people of African descent" (2017); and "Remember slavery: triumphs and struggles for freedom and equality" (2018).

IV. Permanent memorial

8. Through the *Ark of Return*, the Remember Slavery programme conveys to visitors the lessons and legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

9. The programme continued to promote the permanent memorial at an annual global student video conference. Architects Rodney Leon and Hossam Younes, both members of the *Ark of Return* design team, participated in the conferences and briefed students about the significance of its triangular shape and the three design elements: "acknowledge the tragedy"; "consider the legacy"; and "lest we forget". Students participating in the conference were invited to visit the *Ark of Return* afterwards.

10. The Remember Slavery programme is working in close partnership with the Visitor Services unit to increase the number of visitors to the permanent memorial. The unit's website features the *Ark of Return* prominently and offers a special tour during Black History Month in the United States of America (February). The Remember Slavery programme also conducted weekly briefings for students and members of the general public at the *Ark of Return*, from March to December each year. The permanent memorial is also promoted on the social media accounts of the programme and the Visitor Services unit. A small replica of the permanent memorial is sold in the United Nations Bookshop.

11. The programme continues to produce promotional materials, including a multilingual poster and brochure to encourage visits to the permanent memorial. Posters and postcards were disseminated to United Nations Information Centres and schools. The programme also developed an annual calendar featuring the *Ark of Return*, which was available on the programme's website for download. Print copies were made available to the Visitor Services unit and stakeholders, including Permanent Missions to the United Nations. The programme also produced several interviews with the ambassadors, keynote speakers and students at the *Ark of Return*, which were promoted on social media.

V. Annual commemorations

12. The Department of Public Information collaborated with the Office of the President of the General Assembly, and States members of CARICOM and the African Union to organize annually a series of events around the week of 25 March in observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

A. Solemn commemorative meetings of the General Assembly

13. In 2016, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade was observed at United Nations Headquarters on Tuesday, 29 March. The commemorative meeting of the General Assembly featured remarks by the President of the Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General and Member States. The keynote address was delivered by Sheila Walker, cultural anthropologist, filmmaker and Executive Director of Afrodiaspora, Inc.

14. In 2017, the International Day was observed at United Nations Headquarters on 24 March. The commemorative meeting of the General Assembly featured remarks by the President of the Assembly, the Secretary-General and Member States. The keynote address was delivered by Lonnie Bunch, Director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture in

Washington, D.C. Following the ceremony, there was an unveiling of newly installed plaques at the *Ark of Return*.

15. In 2018, the International Day was observed at United Nations Headquarters on 26 March 2018. The commemorative meeting of the General Assembly featured remarks by the Secretary-General, the Vice-President of the Assembly and Member States. The keynote address was delivered by Graciela Dixon, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama.

B. Cultural and culinary events

16. The Remember Slavery programme organized a cultural and culinary event to coincide with the commemorative sessions to celebrate the heritage and traditions that enslaved Africans had brought to Europe and the Americas. The events included musical performances by Dion Parson and the 21st Century Band (2016), La Familia Sextet (2017) and the Feraba African Rhythm Tap Band as well as Jamaican reggae artist Kezzi (2018).

17. In 2016, contributing Member States included Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, El Salvador, Ghana, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Panama, Paraguay, Senegal, Suriname, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine and Uruguay.

18. In 2017, contributing Member States included Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belize, Brazil, Cabo Verde, members of CARICOM, Cuba, Ghana, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, the Philippines, Senegal, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

19. In 2018, contributing Member States included Albania, Belize, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Cuba, Egypt, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, Haiti, India, Israel, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Nigeria, Panama, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

C. Global videoconferences for students

20. On 13 May 2016, the 8th annual Remember Slavery global student videoconference was held at United Nations Headquarters New York. The videoconference brought students together from Senegal, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States to discuss the heritage and culture of the African diaspora. Featured speakers included: A. Missouri Sherman-Peter, Permanent Observer for CARICOM; Rodney Leon, architect of the *Ark of Return*; and Sheila Walker.

21. On 12 May 2017, the programme organized the 9th annual global student videoconference, which brought together students from Jamaica, Liberia and the United States to discuss black achievement. Through sharing presentations and artistic performances, students learned about the ways in which enslaved Africans and their descendants influenced and continue to shape societies around the world, including in the areas of technology, social activism and culture. Featured speakers included: José Luis Fialho Rocha, Permanent Representative of Cabo Verde to the United Nations; Pennelope Althea Beckles, Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations; and Richard Benjamin, Head of the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Delivering a spoken word performance was Soré Agbaje, a graduate of Urban Word NYC.

22. On 27 April 2018, the programme organized its 10th annual global student videoconference, which brought together students from Mexico, the United Republic

of Tanzania and the United States to discuss the triumphs and struggles of people of African descent. Featured speakers included: A. Missouri Sherman-Peter, Permanent Observer for CARICOM to the United Nations; Mahammed Naguib Soomauroo, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations; Hossam Younes, of Rodney Leon Architects; and Professor Christian Crouch of Bard College. A musical performance was given by Jesse George and Alia Pierre. The event was held with support from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Associated Schools Project Network of UNESCO, the New York City Department of Education and United Nations Information Centres.

D. Briefings for non-governmental organizations and panel discussions

23. On 14 April 2016, the Department of Public Information organized a round-table discussion entitled "The musical journey of the African diaspora", at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Experts told participants that the rhythms and musical traditions enslaved people brought with them from their homeland were essential to their survival and maintaining their identity. Speakers included: Craig Boyd, Professor of Music at Suffolk County Community College; Peter Manuel, Professor of Ethnomusicology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York; and Melissa Gonzalez, Professor of World Music and Western Art Music at Hunter College and Montclair State University. The discussion was moderated by Marta Moreno Vega, Founder and President of the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute and adjunct professor at the Department of Arts and Public Policy of New York University.

24. On 30 March 2017, the Department held a discussion with representatives of non-governmental organizations entitled "The transatlantic slave trade and the socioeconomic contributions of people of African descent" at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Speakers included: Professor Verene A. Shepherd of the University of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica; Professor Joseph E. Inikori of the University of Rochester, New York; Dean Ben Vinson of George Washington University, Washington, D.C.; and Cy Richardson of the National Urban League, New York. The discussion focused on the socioeconomic contributions that people of African descent have made to the development of societies in Latin America, the United States and the Caribbean from past to present.

25. On 29 March 2018, the Department held a discussion with non-governmental organizations entitled "Triumphs and struggles for freedom and equality" at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Speakers included Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations; Charo Mina-Rojas, National Coordinator of Advocacy and Outreach for the Black Communities' Process; Danei Cesario, Associate Architect, Array Architects; and Jadayah Spencer, Executive Director of the International Youth Leadership Institute.

VI. Other educational activities

A. Film screenings

26. Recognizing the power of film as an educational tool, the Department continued its multilingual film series related to the transatlantic slave trade and the legacy of slavery.

27. On 16 February 2016, the Remember Slavery programme organized a screening in New York of the film *Race* in partnership with the New Jersey Amistad

Commission, the New Jersey and New York Departments of Education and Focus Features.

28. On 31 March 2016, the programme participated in events commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the African Burial Ground National Monument in New York. Events included a student event, art and a tour, and screenings of the documentary films *Then I'll Be Free to Travel Home: the Legacy of the New York African Burial Ground* and *The Ark of Return*.

29. On 18 February 2017, the programme partnered with the African Burial Ground National Monument in New York to host two screenings of the documentary film *Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise*, at the Monument, which were followed by discussions with the film's co-director and producer, Rita Coburn Whack.

30. On 18 October 2017, the programme partnered with the Office of the Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) and Afrodiaspora, Inc. for a screening of the documentary film *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*, at the Hall of the Americas at the OAS Main Building.

31. On 8 February 2018, the Department partnered with the International Decade for People of African Descent for a screening of *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*, which was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The film was produced by Sheila Walker.

B. Other educational activities

32. On 24 March 2016, in observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the programme partnered with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations to organize a panel discussion entitled "The transatlantic slave trade: constructing new Amistad, Bunce Island, Gullah, Maroon and Nova Scotia bridges", at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The event was co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the United Nations and the Sierra Leone Monuments and Relics Commission.

33. On 31 August 2016, the programme organized a lecture entitled "Resistance to and the impact of the transatlantic slave trade". The lecture explored facts and misconceptions regarding the transatlantic slave trade and was moderated by the Department of Public Information. Speakers included Marie Paule Roudil, Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office and Natasha Lightfoot, Associate Professor of History at Columbia University. The event was held under the umbrella theme of "The birth of a nation: slavery, resistance and abolition" lecture series, which was a joint initiative by the United Nations, the American Library Association, Fox Searchlight Pictures and BazanED.

34. On 7 December 2016, the programme organized a tour of the *Ark of Return* for the Permanent Representative of Suriname to the United Nations, the Mapping Slavery project, from Amsterdam, and other special guests from Suriname.

35. From 27 through 30 December 2016, the programme participated in and distributed promotional materials on the *Ark of Return* during the events held at the African Burial Ground National Monument for Kwanzaa.

36. On 27 December 2017, the programme gave presentations on the *Ark of Return* at the African Burial Ground National Monument for Kwanzaa, in New York. The presentations tied in with the day's theme of *Kujichagulia* (self-determination).

VII. Educational and promotional materials

A. Exhibitions

37. The Remember Slavery programme mounted the exhibit *Africans in India: from Slaves to Generals and Rulers*, in February and March 2016 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The exhibit was created by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library. The curators were Sylviane A. Diouf, Director of the Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery at the Schomburg Center, and Kenneth X. Robbins, collector and expert in Indian art. The programme facilitated the display of this exhibit at the Museum of African Heritage in Georgetown, Guyana, in August 2016, in partnership with the Schomburg Center. The programme also produced travelling versions of the exhibit in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, which were displayed by United Nations Information Centres around the world. The United Nations Information Centre in New Delhi produced and displayed the Hindi version.

38. On the occasion of its tenth anniversary in 2017, the programme produced an exhibition entitled "Remember slavery: recognition, justice and development", outlining its programme of activities and its common objectives with those of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024). The exhibition is displayed on the guided tour route of the General Assembly building. The programme produced travelling versions of the exhibit in French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish that were displayed at 20 United Nations Information Centres.

39. In 2018, the programme mounted the exhibit "A Legacy of Black Achievement" in the visitors' lobby at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Produced by the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, United Kingdom, and adapted from the "Black Achievers Wall" gallery at the museum, the exhibit is a celebration of black achievers, past and present. It featured 22 notable personalities of various backgrounds, eras, regions and disciplines, who paved the way for civil rights, human rights, recognition and justice for people of African descent in Africa and the diaspora. The programme also produced travelling versions of the exhibit in all six official languages of the United Nations, which were displayed at 18 United Nations Information Centres in 2018. The Centre in Dar es Salaam produced and displayed the Kiswahili version at its premises.

40. The programme also mounted the exhibit "Remember slavery: say it loud", in March 2018 in the visitors' lobby of the General Assembly building. Produced in collaboration with the National Organization of Minority Architects, the exhibit highlighted the work of 21 architects of African descent who, through their perseverance and creative talent, have gained recognition in this elite profession.

B. Film packages

41. In 2016, the programme subtitled the film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* in French, Portuguese and Spanish and made it available to United Nations Information Centres for their commemorative activities. In 2017, the Department produced, as part of its UNStories series, a film entitled *The African Roots of Cuba's Music*, featuring the impact of the transatlantic slave trade on the culture and music of Cuba.

42. In 2018, the programme subtitled the film *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places: A Global African Diaspora* in French, Portuguese and Spanish and made it available to United Nations Information Centre for use in their commemorative activities. The

programme worked with the Centre in Dar es Salaam and United Nations Offices in Minsk and Yerevan to subtitle the film into Armenian, Kiswahili and Russian.

C. Website

43. The Department redesigned its "Remember Slavery" website[1] in the six official languages in 2017 to reflect the new brand that was produced for its tenth anniversary. The programme also expanded the scope of activities posted on the site to include articles on its educational events in all six official languages. In addition, summaries on the commemorative events held by the global network of United Nations Information Centres have been added. The site includes educational resources on the transatlantic slave trade and the permanent memorial.

D. Print products

44. The programme continues to develop traditional media and multilingual print materials such as flyers, posters, postcards, banners, bookmarks, pins, folders and press kits. To commemorate the programme's 10-year anniversary, the Department of Public Information rolled out the new logo that was featured on various products, including a notepad for students, social media cards, stickers and brochures. Posters and postcards continue to be available in digital format at the United Nations Information Centres in the six official languages, as well as in Kiswahili and Portuguese. In 2017, the programme also produced a USB card and sticker that featured the new logo of the programme.

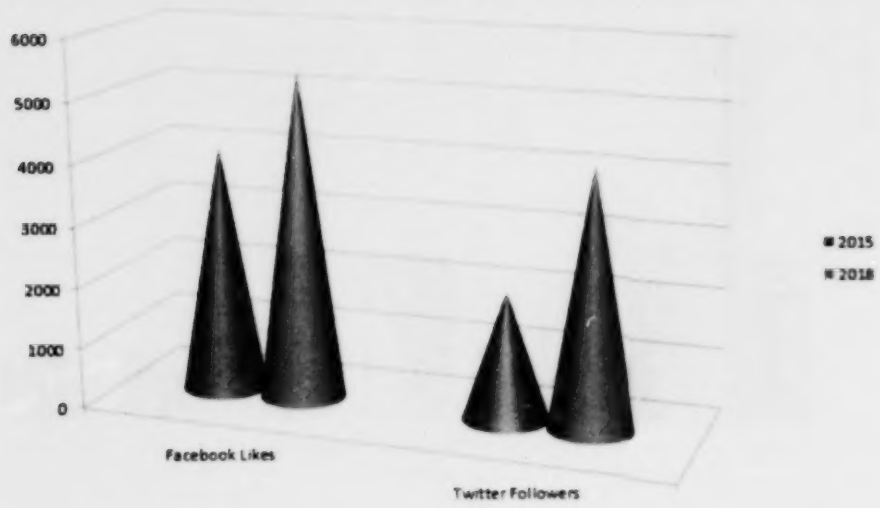
E. Multimedia

45. The Department facilitated media coverage of the activities held throughout the year through its multimedia and social media services. Events and the activities related to the permanent memorial were promoted through Facebook, Twitter and the main United Nations social media accounts, including YouTube. From 2015 to 2018, the programme's Facebook account experienced a 30 per cent increase in likes. The programme's Twitter account experienced a 60 per cent increase in the number of followers (see figure 1).

46. The Department helped to raise awareness of both the programme and the *Ark of Return* with a series of podcasts, 15 news stories and eight audio interviews pertaining to the lessons, consequences and legacy of the transatlantic slave trade.

[1] Available at: www.remembersslavery.un.org.

Figure I
Social media followers, Remember Slavery programme

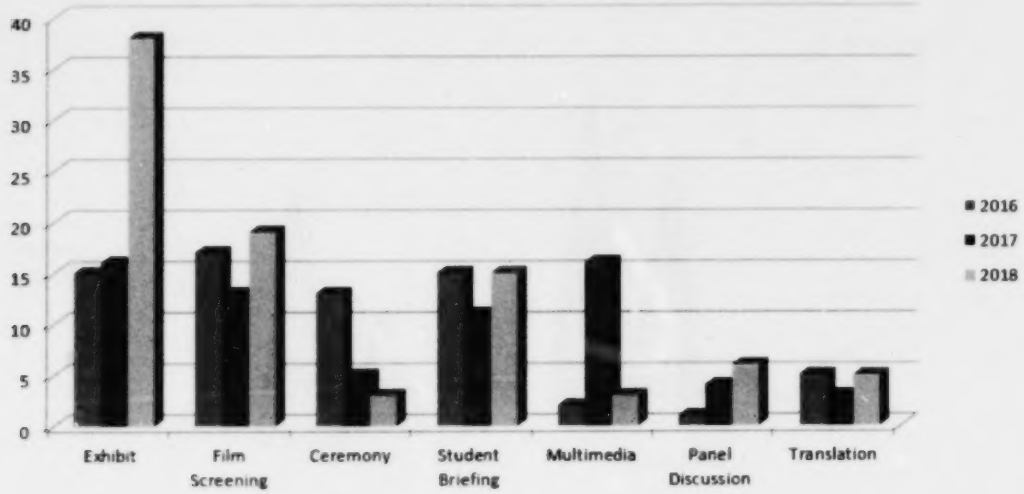


VIII. Activities of the United Nations Information Centres

A. Summary of United Nations Information Centre activities, 2016 to 2018

47. The Remember Slavery programme sharpened its focus and strengthened its support for the outreach activities of the global network of United Nations Information Centres over the past three years. By identifying themes closely linked to the International Decade for People of African Descent, including justice, equality, recognition and development, and by producing multilingual educational materials that convey the lessons, consequences and legacy of slavery, the programme has helped to increase the number and quality of activities implemented by United Nations Information Centres. The key messages of the programme have resonated with academics, students, teachers and non-governmental organizations around the world through the activities of the United Nations Information Centres, helping the programme to achieve a global impact. While roughly the same number of Information Centres held activities in 2015, there has been an increase of nearly 30 per cent since then in the level of their activities — from 70 to 90. These included exhibits, film screenings, ceremonies, student briefings, multimedia, panel discussions and the translation of educational materials into local languages (see figure 2).

Figure 2
Number of "Remember Slavery" activities by United Nations Information Centres



B. Africa

48. The United Nations Information Centre in Accra organized student forums, film screenings and exhibits to commemorative the international day during this reporting period. Exhibits included: "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers"; "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development"; and "A legacy of black achievement". Films that were screened included: *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*; *They are We*; and *Familiar Faces, Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*. In addition, the Centre organized a university visit to the Slave River region. Partners included: the University of Ghana; the Tema Community "7" Basic School; the Central University; Abibimman Foundation; and the Ashesi University College.

49. The United Nations Information Centre in Antananarivo organized commemorative ceremonies, film screenings and exhibits. The Centre displayed the exhibit "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development" in French at its premises. It also displayed the exhibit "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers" at the United Nations Information Centre premises and Estiim University and organized a screening of the films *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora* in French.

50. The United Nations Information Centre in Brazzaville organized commemorative events, including conferences, film screenings and discussions. Films screened included: *They Are We*; *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*; and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora* in French. The Centre also produced and distributed a promotional card on the *Ark of Return*. Partners in these events included Marien Ngouabi University and the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of the Congo.

51. The United Nations Information Centre in Bujumbura organized student briefings, which included a reading of the Secretary-General's message, and screenings of the films *Coeur de Lion*; *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*; *They Are We*; and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora* in French. The Centre also mounted the exhibits "Africans in India:

from slaves to generals and rulers" and "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development" in French.

52. The United Nations Information Centre in Dakar participated in a special programme about slavery, produced by the Senegalese television talk show *Impressions*. The Centre also displayed the exhibits "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development" in French at the Chambre de commerce, d'industrie et d'agriculture de Dakar, and "A legacy of black achievement" in French at its own premises. In addition, the United Nations Information Centre screened *The Goree Memorial, a Monument of African Renaissance in Transatlanticism*. Partners for this screening included the Gorée Memorial and the Chambre de commerce. In 2016, the United Nations Information Centre coordinated the participation via video link of local high school students in the eighth annual global student videoconference, organized by the Remember Slavery programme at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

53. The United Nations Information Centre in Dar es Salaam held an observance for the international day at the Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy, which included a screening of the film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*. The Centre translated and screened the film *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora* and organized a two-day educational field trip for 50 students from Dar es Salaam and Kilwa schools to the slave ruins in Kilwa District. The Centre displayed the exhibits "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers" and "A legacy of black achievement", both of which were translated into Kiswahili by the Centre. The Centre also launched a social media campaign in Kiswahili and English, using the hashtags #kumbukautumwa and #RememberSlavery.

54. The United Nations Information Centre in Harare organized commemorative events, exhibits, film screenings and discussions. Exhibits included "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers", "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development" and "A legacy of black achievement". Films screened included *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*; *They Are We*; and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*.

55. The United Nations Information Centre in Lagos organized film screenings and discussions, exhibits, briefings and a visit to the Slave History Museum in Calabar, Nigeria. Exhibits included: "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers"; "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development"; and "A legacy of black achievement". Films screened included *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*.

56. The United Nations Information Centre in Lomé organized exhibits, film screenings, briefings and visits to the Slave House and the Well of the Enchained Persons memorials. Exhibits included "Mediathèque Jean-Paul II" and "A legacy of black achievement" in French. Films screened included: *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*; *They Are We*; and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora* in French. Partners included local schools and the Collège Protestant Lomé-Agbalépédogan.

57. The United Nations Information Centre in Lusaka coordinated a videoconference discussion on slavery with United Nations Information Centres in Accra, Lagos and Nairobi, which included university students, college lecturers, media representatives and experts in the field of slavery and human rights. In addition, the Centre in Lusaka organized outreach activities and screenings of the films *The Batwa People*; *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*; and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*. The United Nations Information Centre also displayed the exhibit "A legacy of black achievement" and launched a text message social media campaign. Partners in these events included the

non-governmental organizations Youth Destiny, the Ministry of General Education of Zambia and local schools.

58. The United Nations Information Centre in Nairobi organized a panel discussion and screening of the film *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*. The Centre also displayed the exhibit "A legacy of black achievement" in French. Partners in these activities included local schools and universities.

59. The United Nations Information Centre in Ouagadougou organized lectures in high schools, exhibits and film screenings. Exhibits included "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers", "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development" and "A legacy of black achievement". Films screened included *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*; and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*. Partners included the University of Ouagadougou and local schools.

60. The United Nations Information Centre in Pretoria organized commemorative events around exhibits, and films screenings and discussions. The Centre displayed the exhibit "Remembering Slavery: recognition, justice and development" and screened the films *The Middle Passage*, *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*.

61. The United Nations Information Centre in Yaoundé organized exhibits in both French and English, and held film screenings as part of their commemorative events. Exhibits included "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development" and "A legacy of black achievement". Films screened included *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*; and *Slave Routes: A Global Vision*. The Centre organized these activities in partnership with local schools and universities, the national museum in Yaoundé and the Pan African Youth Network for Culture of Peace.

C. The Americas

62. The United Nations Information Centre in Asunción organized a workshop in Spanish on African rhythms and cultural heritage. The event included a discussion about the history of black communities in Paraguay and the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade. The Centre also displayed the exhibit "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers".

63. The United Nations Information Centre in Bogotá organized exhibits and film screenings in Spanish to mark the international day. Exhibits included "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development", which was transferred to the Centre for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation in Bogotá. The United Nations Information Centre also produced an original audio-photo documentary exhibit entitled "Palenque: la herencia de la libertad", which highlighted the legacy of freedom in a community of descendants of marooned slaves. Films screened included *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*; and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*. Partners included the Claretiana University Foundation, the Memory, Peace and Reconciliation Centre in Bogotá, Fundación Centro de Cultura Afrocaribe and Casa de Cultura.

64. The United Nations Information Centre in Mexico City organized two discussions and screenings of the film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* in Spanish at the Cineteca Nacional in Mexico City and at the National Institute of Anthropology and History. The United Nations Information Centre also organized the participation of the Carol Baur International School in Naucalpan at the tenth annual global student video conference organized by the programme.

65. The United Nations Information Centre in Panama City hosted an event in Spanish for students from the University of Panama's Faculty of Law and Political Science, government officials, the diplomatic corps, the media and representatives of international and Afro-Panamanian organizations. The event included a screening of the film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* and a display of the exhibit "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers". Performers from La Reina Congo used music and dance to tell stories about the transatlantic slave trade.

66. The United Nations Information Centre in Port of Spain organized several exhibits and film screenings to mark the International Day. The exhibits included "Africans in India: from slaves to general and rulers" and "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development". The Centre also organized two screenings and discussions of the film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*. Partners in these events included the Scarborough Library in Tobago and the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO. The United Nations Information Centre also arranged for students to participate in the 8th annual global student videoconference.

67. The United Nations Information Centre in Washington, D.C., partnered with a cinema in Maryland to organize a screening and discussion of the film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* at the theatre. The event was as part of the D.C. Caribbean Film Festival.

D. Asia and the Pacific

68. The United Nations Information Centre in Canberra organized during the reporting period a forum, a seminar, a film screening and exhibit to mark the International Day. The United Nations Information Centre partnered with the Faculty of Law at the University of Technology in Sydney to organize a screening and discussion of the film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess*. A seminar organized by the Centre, Anti-Slavery Australia and the University of Technology in Sydney included a display of the exhibit "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development". The forum titled "Ending Slavery: Forum on Combatting Slavery Today" was organized in partnership with the civil society organizations.

69. The United Nations Information Centre in New Delhi organized several exhibits and a film screening to mark the International Day. The exhibits included "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers"; "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development"; and "A legacy of black achievement". The United Nations Information Centre also organized a discussion and screening of the film *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*. Partners included the South Asian University and the Department of African Studies at Delhi University, the United Nations House in Lodi Estate, the Association of Spouses of African Heads of Missions, Jawaharlal Nehru University, the Ethiopian Cultural Centre in New Delhi, Lalit Kala Akademi and the art gallery of the India International Centre Annexe.

E. Europe

70. The United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, in Brussels, translated the poster exhibit "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development" into Dutch and distributed both the Dutch and French posters to five schools in Belgium. The schools displayed the exhibit and focused their related lessons on the 2017 theme. The exhibit was also displayed at the University of Ghent for two weeks.

71. The United Nations Information Service in Geneva displayed the exhibits "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development" and "A legacy of black achievement" in English and French in the Palais des Nations.

72. The United Nations Office in Tbilisi organized a film screening, a conference and exhibit to mark the international day. The Office organized a screening and discussion of the film *Queen Nanny: Legendary Maroon Chieftainess* for students from Batumi State University. The Office also invited students from local universities to attend a one-day conference on the theme "Celebrating the Heritage and Culture of the African Diaspora and its Roots". The Office displayed the exhibit "Africans in India: from slaves to generals and rulers" at Tbilisi State University.

73. The United Nations Office in Yerevan organized film screenings and briefings with students from local schools as part of their commemorative events. The Office organized screenings and discussions of the films *Slave Route: Soul of Resistance* and *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places — A Global African Diaspora*. The Office translated the scripts of these films into Armenian and produced branded promotional material, including a roll-up banner, stickers, bookmarks, notepads, pens, handouts and brochures for distribution to participants. The Office also displayed the exhibit "Remembering slavery: recognition, justice and development".

IX. Activities of Member States

74. In General Assembly resolution 70/7, Member States were requested to provide information about their national educational programmes designed to educate and inculcate in future generations an understanding of the lessons, history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade. The contributions received by the Secretariat in 2016 and 2017 are summarized below.

75. To date, Bosnia and Herzegovina has not developed any special educational programmes designed to educate future generations in terms of the understanding, history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade. However, the issue of modern-day slavery and the problem of trafficking in human beings is addressed, as well as the realization of all strategic documents related to this field. In addition, each year, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and the Ministry of Security allocate funds for the protection of victims of trafficking. These funds are intended for the care of victims in safe houses, the provision of necessary care and the resocialization and reintegration of victims.

76. China incorporated the issue of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade into middle school textbooks for history, philosophy and politics in order to better educate students against racism, racial discrimination, racial oppression and other forms of intolerance. China is currently compiling secondary-level textbooks to reflect the revised regular high school history course standard. The new high school standard will include the study of the colonial expansion of western countries into Asia, Africa and Latin America, the establishment of the world colonial system, the resistance by Asian, African and Latin American people and the impact of the national independence movements in semi-colonies on world history.

77. Chile has focused its education on slavery efforts in the context of the Spanish colonial period and the conflicts that took place with the indigenous peoples, notably the Mapuches. The Government has incorporated the issues of slavery in the curricula of history, geography and social sciences courses from the third to the eighth levels of education, following updates made to the core educational requirements in 2012 and 2013 and in the objectives defined in 1996. A law adopted in 2016 mandated the creation of citizenship training plans, which, while not directly linked with the

remembrance of the victims of slavery, do enforce education from the perspective of human rights, equality and non-discrimination, in line with international standards.

78. Colombia's Ministry of National Education has established the position of Chair of Afro-Colombian Studies at all educational institutions, with the goal of educating students about the history and contemporary presence of people of African descent, including their contributions to society. In addition, the Government has established African Heritage Month in May, a chairperson for the International Decade for People of African Descent, ethno-educational guidelines on cultural diversity and the identity of people of African descent and the Galeón Bucaneros Ship Museum, which is dedicated to teaching about the transatlantic slave trade.

79. Costa Rica addresses the topic of the transatlantic slave trade in elementary social studies and civic education and secondary school studies. At the elementary level, instruction touches on discrimination against indigenous people and people of African descent, slavery and women. At the secondary level, instruction touches on the social, economic, political and cultural characteristics of colonial societies in the Americas and Costa Rica from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, resistance, population status and dynamics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and internal mobility in contemporary society.

80. Cuba addresses the issue of slavery in its history curricula, from elementary levels to higher education, as a scourge suffered by thousands of people to satisfy the needs of the plantation economy of the colony. The teaching of this content reflects the suffering inflicted on the slave population, as well as the inhumane methods used to hunt the slaves who ran away from their masters. Thus, it encourages students to reject this cruel practice.

81. In Germany, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany is currently reviewing its recommendation on human rights education (2000) and its decision to strengthen democracy education (2009) in order to respond to current social and political developments. At the school level, the nationwide network "School without racism — school with courage", is open to all schools. At least 70 per cent of students, teachers and technical staff intervene actively in conflicts and pledged to take action against any form of discrimination at their school. The network includes more than 2,400 schools and more than 1 million students. The German Federal Agency for Civic Education offer several different educational tools, such as books, newspapers and online information which highlight the topic of slavery and the slave trade.

82. In Greece, high school students learned about the transatlantic slave trade in history, social and political education and sociology classes. In addition, in accordance with a ministerial decision on school activities, thematic axes are being proposed for a curriculum, which will include human rights and values, children's rights, migration, asylum, war, the refugee crisis, refugees and health, trafficking and trafficking in human beings, issues of identity, integration, intercultural dialogue, immigration and actions of international organizations, active citizens, civil society, volunteerism, migration and media, and Greek migratory and refugee flows over time. Government organizations, non-governmental organizations and schools have approved and implemented educational programmes that refer to more modern forms of slavery and human trafficking.

83. Jamaica has implemented several initiatives aimed at increasing public awareness of the history of slavery and the transatlantic trade in Africans. At the secondary and advanced proficiency levels of education, the history curriculum has dedicated modules to slavery in the Caribbean and the legacy of colonialism. One of the challenges is a declining number of students who study history beyond the ninth grade — the Government is thus considering making history a compulsory subject.

The Culture in Education programme developed in 2002 incorporates cultural elements into school curricula and encourages exhibitions, visits to historical sites and museums and interactions with elders. The Government has instituted an annual Jamaica Day to celebrate Jamaican culture at all levels of education, and some schools participate in Black History Month. Other cultural celebrations include Emancipation and Independence Day in August and Heritage Week and National Heroes' Day in October. The country also marks the passing of the Slave Trade Abolition Act by the United Kingdom and the anniversary of the *Zong* slave ship tragedy of 1782. Since 2009, the National Commission on Reparations has been engaged in public education through the "Run for reparations" event and various youth rallies.

84. Students in Spain study the transatlantic slave trade and trafficking in the third and fourth year of secondary school. In the third year, students study seventeenth-century Europe, conquest and colonization and the different causes that led to the discovery of the America continent. In the fourth year, students study the eighteenth century up to 1789 and the history of Spain. Students are tested on their knowledge of different economic sectors, the industrial policy of the monarchy and measures taken in relation to trade with the Americas. Spain also teaches about the transatlantic slave trade and African culture through educational programmes and exhibitions at the National Museum of Anthropology.

85. The Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey implemented a nationwide curriculum in high schools following the principle of non-discrimination. The new curriculum is founded on the principle of upholding equality and freedom of religion, conscience, thought and expression, as well as justice, social peace and human rights. It is aimed at defending universal human rights and the right to live free from discrimination based on race, colour, religion, language, political preference, ethnicity, property ownership or any other consideration. In this framework, history lectures covered racist movements in the United States of America, the political consequences of colonialism in Africa, the liberation movements, decolonization in Asia and Africa and the socioeconomic consequences of the interaction between colonialism and global capitalism.

X. Contribution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to the programme of educational outreach on the transatlantic slave trade

86. Through its Slave Route Project, UNESCO has pursued its activities to raise awareness about the legacies of the slave trade and slavery in different parts of the world and contributed to the development of research on related neglected aspects and in little-covered regions. With a view to contributing to the International Decade for People of African Descent, new directions were defined for the Slave Route Project, to take into account the current international context marked by the increasing recognition of the lasting impact of that tragedy and of African heritage in many Member States, in particular in Latin America. These efforts are also aimed at entrenching the project in the present and in the reflection on the future of our contemporary societies by contributing to the debate on reconciliation, inclusion and peacebuilding.

87. UNESCO organized an event in September 2015 at its headquarters on the theme "Artists and the memory of slavery", which included an exhibition of contemporary art creations from 12 young creators from Benin, Cuba and the Dominican Republic, an artistic performance and a symposium to discuss how this memory continues to inspire artists.

88. On the occasion of the proclamation of the International Decade, UNESCO published an updated diary in 2016, providing relevant information on major events, historical figures and significant dates related to the resistance against the slave trade and slavery, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The diary was published in English, French and Spanish.

89. In September 2016, UNESCO organized at its headquarters an international conference on the theme "International Decade for People of African Descent: ten years to act" to discuss the challenges of the International Decade, share national experiences regarding its implementation and explore strategies of action to promote greater synergy between key stakeholders. The meeting brought together around 300 participants, including representatives of the African Union, OHCHR, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, representatives of non-governmental organizations, researchers and journalists.

90. UNESCO undertook various activities to reinforce the capacity of professionals and communities engaged in the inventory, preservation and management of sites of memory related to the slave trade and slavery in various countries (Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, the Republic of the Congo, France, Mozambique, Saint Kitts and Nevis and the United States). In March 2018, it published *Legacies of Slavery: A Resource Book for Managers of Sites and Itineraries of Memory*, which provides concrete recommendations for the promotion of sites. In order to encourage Member States to preserve their memorial heritage, UNESCO has developed a new historical designation "Site of memory associated to the Slave Route", to be granted to sites and places that fulfil the defined criteria.

91. UNESCO helped to deepen the reflection on the psychological consequences of slavery and collaborated with the First Caraïbes Association and the Memorial Act to organize an international symposium on this sensitive issue in the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. The proceedings of that meeting will be published.

92. The International Scientific Committee for the Slave Route Project met in November 2015 in Cape Verde, and in November 2017 in Mauritius, to assess the activities undertaken by the Slave Route Project and propose guidance to reinforce its impact and partnership. During its last meeting in Mauritius, the Committee adopted a declaration that underscored the need to address the practices of enslavement inherited from history and the important role museums play in sensitizing the general public on this legacy.

93. UNESCO organized an international seminar entitled "New approaches in interpreting and representing slavery in museums and sites" in Charlottesville, Virginia, United States, in March 2018, in cooperation with the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, the United States National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, the University of Virginia and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. UNESCO will prepare a handbook on these new approaches on the basis of recommendations from participants and results of the study undertaken by UNESCO on the same subject.

94. UNESCO finalized its pedagogical material (curriculum outlines, teacher guides and textbooks) about the general history of Africa aimed at educating primary- and secondary-level students about the significant contributions of African civilizations to world history. It is also finalizing three new volumes (IX, X and XI) of the *General History of Africa* to address the new challenges faced by Africa and its diaspora.

XI. Future activities

95. During the remainder of 2018 and throughout 2019, the Department will continue to collaborate closely with Member States to promote the annual observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Remember Slavery programme and the *Ark of Return*.

96. The Department will continue to develop fruitful partnerships with CARICOM, the African Union, UNESCO and an array of new civil society organizations. It will also expand its collaboration with academics and museums and outreach to young people. Building on the positive momentum gained since 2015, the programme will continue to produce multilingual educational materials that can be used by educators as well as United Nations Information Centres. Additionally, the programme will ensure significant engagement from the United Nations Information Centres in order to expand the global awareness of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade to wider audiences.

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Human resources management

Activities of the Ethics Office

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/254, entitled "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually on the activities of the Ethics Office and the implementation of ethics policies. The report also includes information on the activities of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 63/250 on human resources management.

The present report covers the period from 1 August 2016 to 31 December 2017, as the Secretary-General proposed in his previous report (A/71/334).

* A/73/50.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report of the United Nations Ethics Office, the twelfth since the establishment of the Office in 2006, is submitted in accordance with paragraph 16 (i) of General Assembly resolution 60/254.

2. The mandate of the Ethics Office is to assist the Secretary-General in ensuring that staff members perform their functions in accordance with the highest standards of integrity required by the Charter of the United Nations. The present report provides an overview of the activities carried out by the Office from 1 August 2016 to 31 December 2017. As proposed in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the Ethics Office (A/71/334) and noted without objection by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report on human resources management (A/71/557), the reporting period has been adjusted to the calendar year. This change harmonizes the reporting cycle with that of other reports on human resources management and the reports of other members of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations.[1]

3. In carrying out its work, the Ethics Office kept abreast of the developments occurring in its operating environment. The current Secretary-General took office at the beginning of 2017. In its work, the Office was cognizant of the Secretary-General's vision behind his management reform, particularly that the United Nations must move to a culture that better manages administrative and mandate delivery risks (see A/72/492, para. 15). It operated according to the preventive role assigned to the ethics function as part of the second line of defence in the "three lines of defence" model adopted by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.[2]

II. Background and general information

4. The Ethics Office was established by the Secretary-General as an independent unit of the Secretariat, pursuant to paragraph 161 (d) of General Assembly resolution 60/1. In accordance with the Secretary-General's bulletins entitled "Ethics Office — establishment and terms of reference" (ST/SGB/2005/22) and "United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes (ST/SGB/2007/11 and ST/SGB/2007/11/Amend.1), the functions of the Office include:

(a) Providing confidential advice and guidance to staff on ethical issues, including administering an ethics helpline;

(b) Administering the Organization's financial disclosure programme;

(c) Administering the Organization's policy on protection against retaliation with regard to the responsibilities assigned to the Ethics Office;

(d) Developing standards, training and education on ethics issues, in coordination with the Office of Human Resources Management and other offices, and conducting ethics-related outreach;

(e) Supporting ethics standard-setting and promoting policy coherence within the Secretariat and among the Organization's funds and programmes.

[1] For purposes of comparison with preceding reporting periods, figures in the present report generally reflect data relating to the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017.

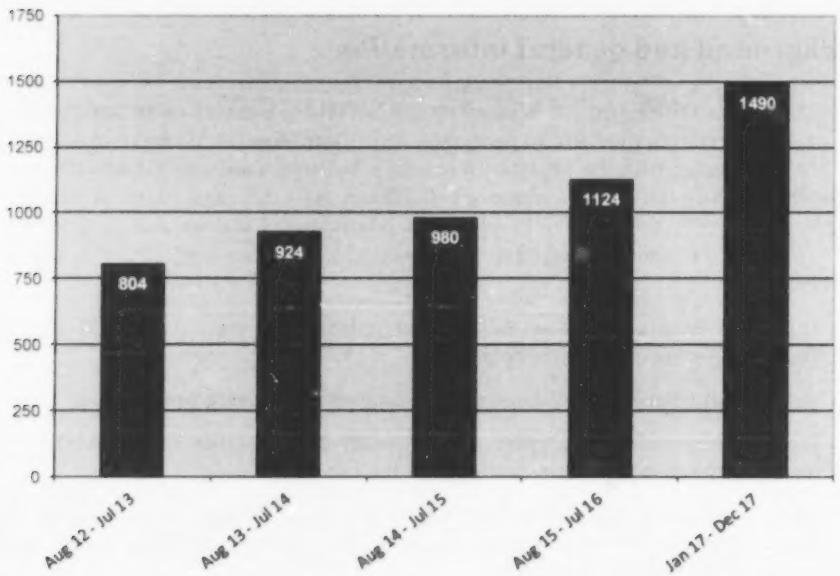
[2] See https://www.unsceb.org/content/action-management-issues-6.

5. With estimated regular budget resources of $3.6 million[3] for the biennium 2016–2017, the Ethics Office served the approximately 40,000 staff of the global Secretariat to promote and sustain an ethical organizational culture of integrity, accountability and transparency. From 1 August 2016 to 31 December 2017, the Office received 2,037 requests for services. Of those requests, 1,490 were received during the calendar year 2017. As shown in figure I, there has been a constant increase in the number of requests over the past five reporting periods, with the largest increase occurring in 2017.

6. The performance measures for the Ethics Office, as indicated in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016–2017, have been achieved or nearly achieved for 2017. To increase the ability of staff to detect ethics issues and apply ethical judgment, the Office conducted 173 outreach and briefing sessions in 2017 (compared with the 2017 target of 125) and resolved 804 enquiries (compared with the 2017 target of 475). In order to effectively administer the financial disclosure programme, the Office achieved 100 per cent submission of statements in 2016 and 99.9 per cent in 2017 (compared with the annual targets of 100 per cent). With regard to effective administration of the policy on protection against retaliation, the Office spent an average of 43 days in 2016 and 26 days on the preliminary review of related complaints in 2017 (compared with the target of 45 days), achieving 100 per cent compliance with the time requirement. In addition, the Office undertook a self-evaluation on the effectiveness of the services that it provides to peacekeeping missions.

Figure I

Overall requests for Ethics Office services over the past five reporting periods

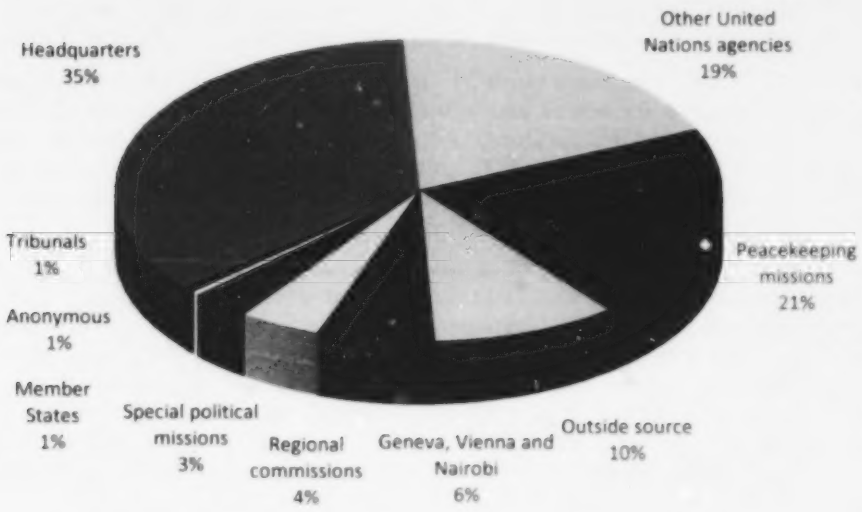


7. Although it is based in New York, the Ethics Office continues to receive many requests from other locations (see figure II). Its regular outreach activities saw the

[3] This amount excludes allotments received under the support account for peacekeeping operations and extrabudgetary funds for the financial disclosure programme for other United Nations agencies.

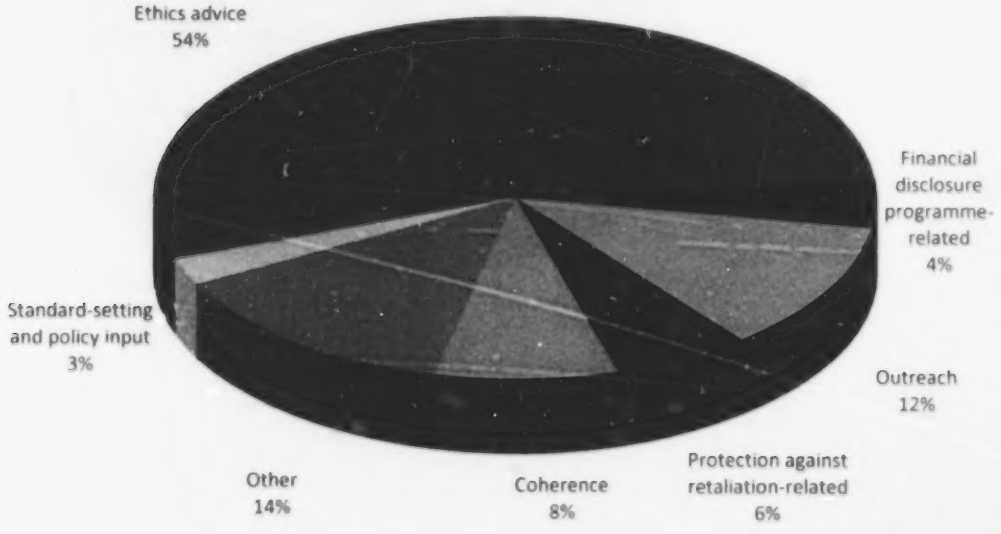
number of service requests increase from 804 five years ago (the 2012/13 reporting period) to 1,490 in 2017.

Figure II
Service requests in 2017, by source



8. Figure III shows that the majority (54 per cent) of the requests submitted in 2017 were for ethics advice. The number of requests for protection against retaliation also increased.

Figure III
Service requests in 2017, by category



III. Activities of the Ethics Office

A. Advice and guidance

9. The Ethics Office provides confidential advice and guidance through its dedicated email address (ethicsoffice@un.org), its helpline and by-appointment meetings. Requests are responded to within 48 hours. The Office provides support with regard to ethical dilemmas; the identification and management of actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest; and the clarification of expected behaviours in accordance with the standards of conduct of the United Nations.

10. From 1 August through 31 December 2016, the Ethics Office responded to 272 requests for advice and guidance. They concerned: outside activities (91); employment-related matters (58); other conflicts of interest, including pre-appointment reviews (45); misconduct reporting procedures (24); gifts and hospitality (34); procurement ethics (12); personal investments and assets (2); and post-employment restrictions (6).

11. In 2017, the Ethics Office responded to 804 enquiries, representing a 23 per cent increase compared with the 622 requests cited in the previous report. As illustrated in figure IV, they concerned: outside activities (269); employment-related matters (202); pre-appointment vetting (96), other conflicts of interest, including personal investments/assets and post-employment restrictions (85); misconduct reporting procedures (69); gifts and honours (60); and institutional integrity matters (23). Figure V provides a comparison with preceding reporting periods in term of subcategories of advice. Some of these main areas are discussed in the paragraphs below.

Figure IV
Requests for ethics advice in 2017, by subcategory

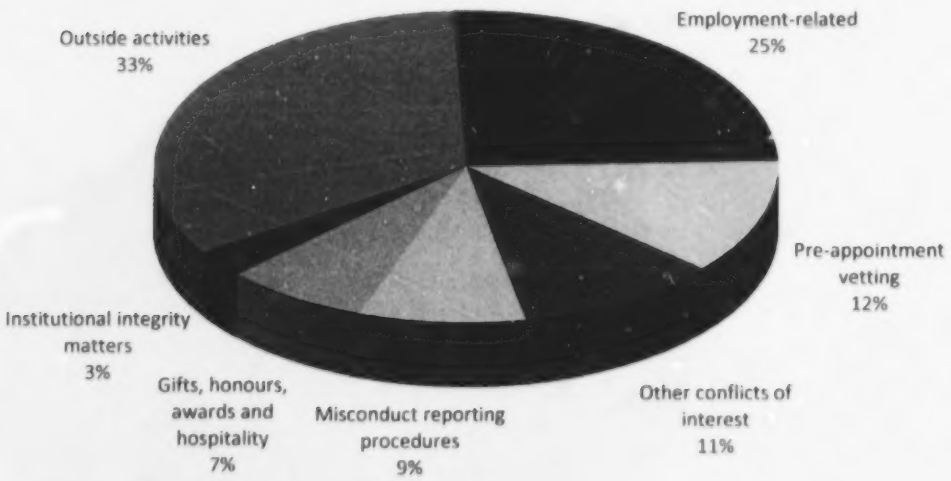
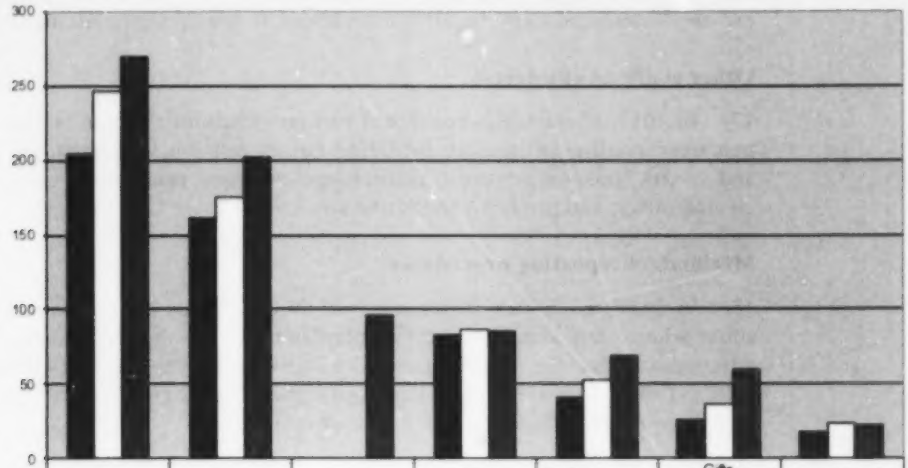


Figure V
Requests for ethics advice over three 12-month reporting cycles, by subcategory



	Outside activities	Employment-related	Pre-appointment vetting[a]	Other conflicts of interest	Misconduct reporting procedures	Gifts, honours, awards and hospitality	Institutional integrity matters
Aug 2014 - July 2015	204	161	-	83	41	26	18
Aug 2015 - July 2016	246	175	-	87	53	37	24
Jan 2017 - Dec 2017	269	202	96	85	69	60	23

[a] Pre-appointment vetting was introduced only in July 2016.

Outside activities

12. Thirty-three per cent of requests for ethics advice submitted in 2017 concerned outside activities. By providing advice on staff involvement in certain external activities, the Ethics Office helps staff to mitigate the risk of conflicts of interest and potential reputational harm to the Organization.

13. The 2017 Leadership Dialogue, entitled "Standards of conduct: what's expected of me?", led to enquiries concerning outside political activities and public pronouncements. The Ethics Office responded, and also provided guidelines for managers and published an iSeek article, on these issues.

Employment-related advice

14. Employment-related issues were the subject of 25 per cent of requests for ethics advice submitted in 2017. Clarification was requested on matters ranging from the Organization's policy on prohibited conduct to ethical behaviour in interpersonal and supervisory relations, career-related concerns and performance appraisal issues. The Ethics Office provided information and made referrals when needed.

Pre-appointment reviews

15. In July 2016, the Secretary-General introduced a pre-appointment disclosure-of-interest form for candidates under consideration for positions at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels. Beginning in July 2017, this vetting requirement was expanded for senior positions in the field, such as force, police and deputy commanders. The Ethics Office examines the disclosed information against the duties and responsibilities of the proposed position, identifies possible conflicts of interest and recommends measures to eliminate or mitigate them. The

vetting process has enabled the Secretary-General to ensure that his senior officials enter the service of the United Nations responsible only to the Organization.

16. From 1 August through 31 December 2016, the Ethics Office reviewed 19 pre-appointment matters. In 2017, it reviewed 96 pre-appointment matters.

Other conflicts of interest

17. In 2017, 85 enquiries concerned various situations that can create an actual or perceived conflict of interest, including family relationships, personal investments and assets, post-employment restrictions, personal references, campaigning for elected office, and pro bono goods and services.

Misconduct reporting procedures

18. In 2017, the Ethics Office received 69 complaints of misconduct or requests about where staff should file their complaints. While the Office does not receive misconduct reports or resolve grievances, it directs staff to relevant offices or guides them in filing a formal report. In that regard, the Office routinely provides information on provisions regarding protection against retaliation.

Honours, decorations, favours and gifts

19. In September 2016, a global gift registry was launched on a pilot basis in follow-up to the administrative instruction on reporting, retaining and disposing of honours, decorations, favours, gifts or remuneration from governmental and non-governmental sources (ST/AI/2010/1). The pilot registry centralizes and automates the gift disclosure and approval process. The introduction of the registry generated a 43 per cent surge in related enquiries compared with the previous reporting cycle.

Institutional integrity matters

20. The Ethics Office provided advice on issues relating to conflicts of interest at the organizational unit level and other reputational risks. Such risks may affect the Organization's ability to carry out its mandates in a fair, objective and impartial manner. Examples include partnerships with private sector businesses to host events or promote activities supported by the United Nations, the acceptance of gifts to the Organization, or offers of support by implementing partners or non-United Nations entities.

Procurement ethics

21. The Ethics Office continued to provide independent advice to the Procurement Division of the Department of Management, particularly on corporate compliance programmes for the reinstatement of vendors. Such advice addressed the technical suitability of external ethics and compliance experts retained by vendors to independently verify whether the vendor's integrity initiatives provided sufficient assurance that it met United Nations requirements. Between August and December 2016, the Office responded to 12 requests related to procurement ethics. In 2017, it responded to queries about 23 vendors.

Due diligence and risk assessment process

22. The General Assembly, in paragraph 67 of its resolution 70/305 on the revitalization of its work, stressed the need for all contributions to the Trust Fund in support of the Office of the President of the General Assembly to be vetted through the Ethics Office.

23. In relation to that mandate, the Ethics Office has been working on a due diligence and risk assessment process for the acceptance of contributions from private individuals and entities. The process defines a consistent approach to the acceptance of private contributions and identifies accountability for assessment and decision-making. The aim is the creation of a framework to assist offices in their due diligence considerations.

Other matters

24. As shown in figure III, 14 per cent of the requests for service submitted in 2017 fell under a catchall "Other" category, including requests for general information, inputs for media enquiries and matters on which the Office has been alerted. The increase in 2017 stems from a more precise definition of this subcategory.

B. Financial disclosure programme

25. The primary purpose of the financial disclosure programme is to identify, mitigate and manage conflict-of-interest risks arising from staff members' financial holdings, private affiliations or non-United Nations activities. The programme is honour-based, with periodic rather than transaction-based disclosures. Designated staff members — those at the D-1 level and above whose principal duties involve procurement and investment, and Ethics Office staff — are required to file confidential annual statements. The review of submitted statements is conducted by a third-party service provider. The aforementioned pre-appointment vetting for conflicts of interest has also assisted in the early detection of possible conflicts of interest, allowing the Organization to manage them.

26. The reporting period covers two filing cycles: 2016 and 2017. During the 2016 filing cycle (covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015), 5,504 filers[4] participated, with a 100 per cent submission rate. Of that total, 1,086, or 19.7 per cent, were first-time filers. During the 2017 cycle (covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016), 5,811 filers[5] participated, with a 99.9 per cent submission rate. Of that total, 1,119, or 19.3 per cent, were first-time filers. Two filers failed to submit their statements and were referred to the Office of Human Resources Management for appropriate accountability measures.

27. The submission rates continued to be high, as in the past. However, some filers did not fully complete all procedures required for the closure of a review. These included responding to requests for clarification or additional information, providing third-party documentation for verification or confirming action taken by the close of the cycle. Such filers continue to be followed up as a priority in the subsequent filing cycle until all the steps are fully satisfied.

28. As in previous cycles, the Ethics Office provided substantive and technical support and guidance to filers. It provided briefings on the financial disclosure programme, including conflict-of-interest management.

29. Verification of information submitted by filers, through random sampling, ensures accuracy and completeness. A total of 226 filers were selected for the 2016 cycle, with 288 filers selected for the 2017 cycle.

[4] This number includes filing staff from the Secretariat and other United Nations system entities that opt to outsource their financial disclosure services to the Secretariat.

[5] This number includes filing staff from the Secretariat and other United Nations system entities that opt to outsource their financial disclosure services to the Secretariat.

30. During the 2016 cycle, 152 filers (2.8 per cent) were identified as requiring review for the management of potential conflicts of interest. Of the total number of items, 9 per cent were related to financial holdings, 55 per cent to outside activities, 34 per cent to family relationships and 2 per cent to other categories. During the 2017 cycle, 127 filers (2.2 per cent) were identified. Of the total number of items, 5 per cent were related to financial holdings, 60 per cent to outside activities, 33 per cent to family relationships and 2 per cent to other categories.

31. The conflict-of-interest figures for the 2016 and 2017 filing cycles are generally consistent with those for previous years. The financial disclosure programme contributes to mitigation of the risk of conflicts of interest as identified in the enterprise fraud and corruption risk register.

32. The number of filers continues to grow, having risen from 1,704 filers in 2006 to 5,504 in 2016 and 5,811 in 2017. This trend may be due to the fact that approximately 20 per cent of the filers each year are first-time filers and the workforce is mobile and located in operationally diverse environments with increasingly decentralized authority, which increases the number of staff identified for filing.

33. The Ethics Office also administers the financial disclosure programme for other entities of the United Nations system that opt to outsource their financial disclosure services to the Secretariat and for the staff of the ethics offices of the funds and programmes. These entities participate on a cost-sharing basis. Such sharing facilitates a common approach and the harmonization of conflict-of-interest management standards across the common system and helps to bring down the unit cost. While filers from the Secretariat and peacekeeping operations constitute the majority, the number of filers from other United Nations system entities has increased, rising from 339 in 2006 to 2,267 in 2016 and 2,465 in 2017.

34. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/250, filing data for 2016 and 2017, broken down by department or office, on (a) the number of individuals covered by the programme; (b) the number of individuals who have complied with their filing obligations; and (c) the number of individuals who have failed to comply with those obligations, are presented in the annex to the present report.

35. During the reporting period, the Ethics Office worked closely with the Office of Information and Communications Technology to develop a new information technology platform to replace the one that had been in use since 2007. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/234, this effort began in 2016 and was completed in 2017. The new financial disclosure system leverages newer technology and more vigorous data security in line with the overall information technology architecture of the United Nations. Launched on 1 March 2018, the new system was brought into operation as from the 2018 filing cycle.

36. Pursuant to paragraph 62 of resolution 70/305, the Ethics Office facilitated the submission of the financial disclosure statements of the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session upon his assumption and completion of duties, and the submission of those of the President of the Assembly at its seventy-second session upon his assumption of duties in 2017.

37. As the contract with the external reviewer of the financial disclosure programme was due to expire on 31 January 2018, a competitive procurement process was initiated in 2017 in cooperation with the Procurement Division. The Ethics Office participated in the technical evaluation of submitted proposals.

38. Under the Secretary-General's annual voluntary public disclosure initiative for senior officials at the level of Assistant Secretary-General and above, public summaries of the disclosures of those officials provide assurance to the public and Member States that the performance of their official functions is not influenced by

personal interests. Only those senior officials whose confidential statements are completed and closed by the end of the disclosure cycle can participate. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 67/255 and 71/263, urged the Secretary-General to encourage senior officials to participate in the initiative.

39. In 2016, of the 163 senior officials eligible to participate in the voluntary public disclosure initiative, 115 (or 70.6 per cent) did so. In 2017, 95 of the 142 eligible senior officials (or 66.9 per cent) participated. Overall participation rates remained largely in line with those in previous years.

40. In addition to participating in the financial disclosure programme and the voluntary public disclosure initiative, key management personnel make disclosures regarding their related-party transactions, under the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). The aggregated outcome of the reviews conducted by the Ethics Office is included in the Secretariat's IPSAS-compliant financial statements. The purpose of such disclosures is to ensure that the financial statements of the United Nations disclose the existence of relationships and transactions between the United Nations and defined related parties. The Ethics Office conducts a review to determine whether any conflicts of interest exist in relation to the United Nations duties of key management personnel and their related-party transactions, and recommends appropriate action. The summary review report was provided to the United Nations Controller and was examined to the satisfaction of the Board of Auditors.

Figure VI
Financial disclosure participation by entity and filing year, 2013–2017

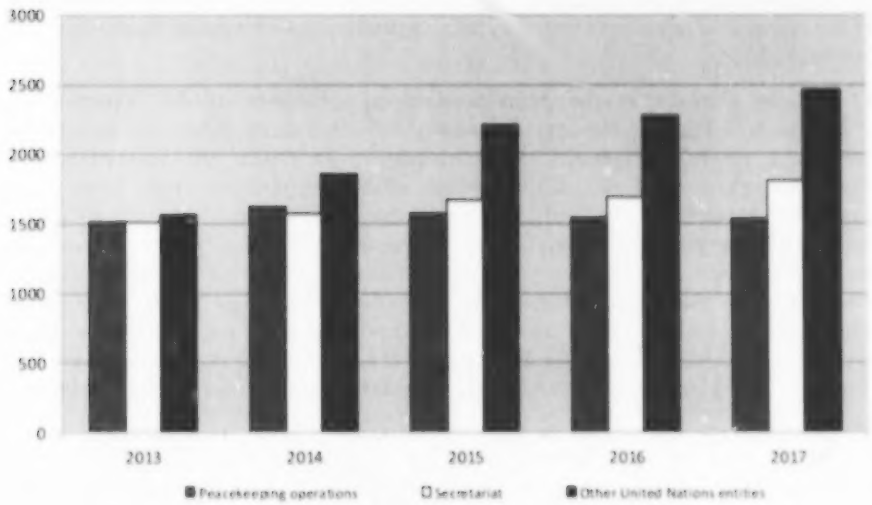


Table 1
Financial disclosure participation by entity and filing year, 2013–2017

	Peacekeeping operations	*Secretariat*	*Other United Nations entities*	*Total*
2013	1 508	1 505	1 560	4 573
2014	1 622	1 566	1 855	5 043
2015	1 564	1 666	2 210	5 440

	Peacekeeping operations	*Secretariat*	*Other United Nations entities*	*Total*
2016	1 538	1 692	2 274	5 504
2017	1 534	1 808	2 469	5 811

C. Protection against retaliation

41. The Ethics Office carries out the responsibilities assigned to it in the Secretary-General's bulletin on protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations. From 1 August 2016 to 19 January 2017,[6] the applicable bulletin was ST/SGB/2005/21; from 20 January to 27 November 2017, it was ST/SGB/2017/2; and as from 28 November 2017 onwards, it has been ST/SGB/2017/2/Rev.1. The policy constitutes an essential anti-corruption measure and a deterrent against other prohibited conduct such as sexual misconduct; it is designed to encourage the reporting of potential wrongdoing and to serve as an internal accountability mechanism.

42. Under the policy on protection against retaliation, the Ethics Office receives complaints of alleged retaliation and conducts preliminary reviews to determine whether the complainant was engaged in a protected activity and, if so, whether the protected activity was a contributing factor in causing the alleged retaliation. If the Ethics Office determines that a prima facie case of retaliation has been established, the burden of proof shifts, as the matter is referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for investigation. The Ethics Office may recommend interim protection measures to safeguard the interests of the complainant. Once the investigation has been completed, the Ethics Office conducts an independent review of the report and the supporting materials to determine whether retaliation has been established.

43. Major changes in the Secretary-General's bulletin of 20 January 2017 (ST/SGB/2017/2) included: (a) the ability of the Ethics Office to recommend preventive protective measures upon referral from OIOS; (b) protection from retaliation against staff who, in the interests of the Organization, report wrongdoing committed not only by other staff, but also by any individual; (c) a preliminary review period of 30 days upon the receipt of all documentation; (d) the right of complainants to seek the review of determinations of the Ethics Office by the Alternate Chair of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations after the preliminary review and to challenge an administrative decision based on a final recommendation of the Office through the system of administration of justice; and (e) the notification of complainants with respect to disciplinary measures taken against staff members found to have retaliated against them.

44. The major changes introduced in ST/SGB/2017/2/Rev.1 included: (a) the extension of protection against retaliation to individual contractors and consultants; (b) as a possible remedial action, the transfer of the person who allegedly engaged in retaliation (with due consideration given to relevant due process rights); and (c) the annual review of the policy on protection against retaliation.

45. From 1 August 2016 to 31 December 2017, the Ethics Office received 112 related enquiries, of which 54 were requests for advice about the policy rather than claims for protection, 10 were outside the Office's jurisdiction and 3 were abandoned during preliminary review. A total of 36 preliminary reviews were

[6] Although ST/SGB/2005/21 was in force until 20 January 2017, no claims regarding protection against retaliation were filed with the Ethics Office between 1 and 20 January 2017.

completed, including one by the Alternate Chair after referral. In 2017, the Office dealt with seven requests for preventive action and conducted two Ethics Panel reviews.[7]

Period from 1 August through 31 December 2016

46. The Ethics Office received 20 enquiries under the policy. Of these, six were requests for advice, rather than claims for protection, and one was outside the Office's jurisdiction. Staff members raising workplace concerns not covered by the policy were referred to appropriate offices, including the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, the Management Evaluation Unit, the Office of Staff Legal Assistance and the Office of Human Resources Management. Staff members reporting misconduct were directed to the appropriate channels.

47. Pursuant to section 4.3 of the Secretary-General's bulletin entitled "United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes" (ST/SGB/2007/11 and ST/SGB/2007/11/Amend.1), the Director of the Ethics Office, in her capacity as Chair of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, reviewed one determination made by a member of the Panel, with which she concurred.

48. The Ethics Office initiated 13 preliminary reviews, of which 10 were completed. Two claims had been abandoned by the staff members concerned as at 31 December 2016, and one preliminary review had not been completed by the Office as at 31 December 2016 owing to a potential conflict of interest and was referred to the Alternate Chair of the Ethics Panel. With respect to the 10 completed preliminary reviews, seven of the claims reviewed did not present a prima facie case of retaliation. Regarding those cases, it was determined that either the complainant had not engaged in an activity protected by the policy or the protected activity had not been a contributing factor in causing the alleged retaliation.

49. The Ethics Office determined that there were three prima facie cases and referred them to OIOS for investigation,[8] with retaliation established in two cases[9] and not established in one.[10]

Period from 1 January through 31 December 2017

50. The Ethics Office received 92 enquiries under the policy. Of these, 48 were not claims for protection, but rather requests for advice, while 9 were outside the Office's jurisdiction (see figure VII for a breakdown of the action taken on the enquiries and table 2 for a comparison with previous reporting periods).

51. The Director of the Ethics Office, in her capacity as Chair of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, reviewed three determinations of no prima facie case by Panel members.[11] With respect to two of the determinations, she concurred; with respect to the other, she reversed the finding.

52. Pursuant to section 5 of ST/SGB/2017/2 and ST/SGB/2017/2/Rev.1, OIOS will refer a case to the Ethics Office where it has identified the report of wrongdoing made to the Office as posing a risk of retaliation. Following such a referral, the Ethics Office may recommend preventive measures to the office or department concerned. In 2017,

[7] However, a total of four Ethics Panel reviews were conducted during the reporting period, as a result of the previous receipt of two requests that were not included in the total number cited.

[8] Two cases were received during the reporting period and were referred to OIOS for investigation in 2017.

[9] Retaliation was established in late 2017 in one case and in early 2018 in another.

[10] Retaliation was not established in early 2018.

[11] One request was from 2016 and therefore is not reflected in figure VII.

OIOS made seven such referrals. Upon consultation with the claimants, the Ethics Office recommended preventive actions in three of the cases: the extension of a temporary appointment, the placement of the staff member on special leave with full pay, and notification of senior management in the Secretariat regarding the case for monitoring purposes.

53. The Ethics Office initiated 26 preliminary reviews during the reporting period; as at 31 December 2017, 22 cases had been completed and one claim had been abandoned. With respect to the 22 completed preliminary reviews, 14 claims[12] did not present a prima facie case. The majority of the cases concerned workplace disputes between the complainants and their colleagues or supervisors.

54. In three claims, the complainant requested review by the Alternate Chair of the Ethics Panel in 2017. In one case, the Alternate Chair reversed the determination and found that the matter raised a prima facie case, which was referred to OIOS for investigation. In two cases, the Ethics Office's determination that there was no prima facie case of retaliation was upheld.

55. With respect to nine claims,[13] the Ethics Office determined that there was a prima facie case of retaliation. The claims were referred to OIOS for investigation. In eight of the cases, the Ethics Office recommended to the Secretary-General that interim measures be taken. All of the interim measures recommended were implemented. They included suspension of termination of contract, special leave with full pay, suspension of e-performance, change in first reporting officer and transfer of the claimant to another duty station. In one case, with the consent of the complainant, the Ethics Office recommended that the relevant office initiate informal resolution. The informal process was unsuccessful, and the matter was eventually referred to OIOS.

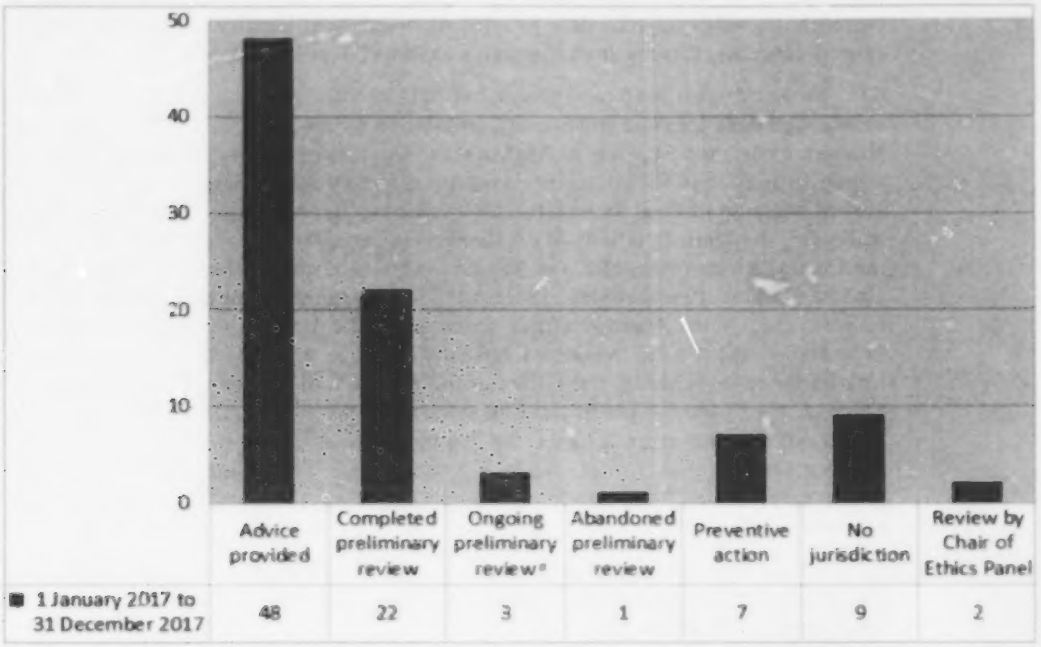
56. In 2017, the Ethics Office made a finding of retaliation after investigating in five cases (two were initiated in 2015, and three were initiated in 2016). Investigations were completed in four of the cases referred to OIOS in 2017, and retaliation was established in two cases in early 2018.

57. In 2017, the Ethics Office spent an average of 26 days on the conduct of its preliminary reviews, which was in line with the 30-day timeline set forth in section 7.4 of the policy on protection against retaliation.

[12] With respect to one claim in which the Ethics Office did not find a prima facie case of retaliation, the Alternate Chair of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations subsequently reversed the determination made.

[13] In one case, the preliminary review was initiated in 2016 and completed in 2017.

Figure VII
Actions taken on enquiries relating to protection against retaliation, 2017



[a] The three remaining preliminary reviews pending with the Ethics Office were completed in early 2018; the Office found a prima facie case of retaliation in two cases and referred the matters to OIOS for investigation.

Table 2
Protection against retaliation statistics, August 2014–December 2017

	August 2014–July 2015	*August 2015–July 2016*	*August 2016–December 2016*	*January 2017–December 2017*
OIOS referral for preventive measures	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	7
Completed preliminary review	14	17	10	22
Prima facie determination	0	6	2[a]	10[b]
Determination of retaliation after investigation	0	4[c]	2[d]	–[e]

[a] Does not include one claim initiated during the period that was referred to OIOS for investigation in 2017.
[b] Includes one claim where the Ethics Office did not find a prima facie case of retaliation and was subsequently reversed by the Alternate Chair of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations.
[c] Includes two claims that were initiated and referred to OIOS for investigation in 2015, with respect to which retaliation was established in 2017, and two claims that were initiated and referred to OIOS for investigation in 2016, with respect to which retaliation was established in 2017.
[d] Includes two claims that were initiated during the reporting period, with respect to which retaliation was established in late 2017 and early 2018.
[e] Does not include the five claims where retaliation was established in 2017 with respect to cases initiated in previous years.

58. The Ethics Office continued its efforts to advise and educate staff on relevant internal misconduct reporting mechanisms as well as on the provisions of the policy on protection against retaliation.

D. Outreach, training and education

59. In collaboration with other offices, the Ethics Office continued to conduct outreach, training and education to fulfil its mandate to identify and address ethics-related concerns, thereby strengthening a shared ethical culture.

60. From 1 August 2016 to 31 December 2017, the Ethics Office conducted outreach missions to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office at Vienna, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, the Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

61. It held town halls, provided guidance on conflicts of interest and confidential ethics advice to individuals, and gave ethics briefings tailored to groups at Headquarters and in the field.

62. As endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/247, the Ethics Office continued to give individual ethics induction briefings for senior leaders to set the right "tone at the top". The Director conducted 31 briefings for newly appointed senior officials at the level of Assistant Secretary-General and above and senior mission staff. Customized briefings were also provided upon request to judges, legal officers, human resources officials, executive officers and newly appointed heads of offices for the funds and programmes. As in the previous year, the Office presented briefings to intergovernmental and expert bodies upon request.

63. During the reporting period, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Ethics Office launched the 2016 and 2017 Leadership Dialogues, entitled "Fraud awareness and prevention: how do I fit in?" (based on ST/IC/2016/25) and "Standards of conduct: what's expected of me?" (based on ST/SGB/2016/9). The dialogues provided an opportunity for staff and managers to discuss ethics and integrity issues. In 2016, some 27,830 United Nations personnel (15,330 at Headquarters and 12,500 at field missions) participated. In 2017, approximately 30,300 personnel (15,500 at Headquarters and 14,800 at field missions) participated.

64. The mandatory online ethics course entitled "Ethics and integrity at the United Nations" was completed by 4,791 staff members, which brought the cumulative total to 17,661. In addition, the Ethics Office, together with OIOS and the Department of Management, completed the development of the e-learning course entitled "Preventing fraud and corruption at the United Nations", which was completed by 1,040 staff members.

65. The Ethics Office website continues to be key to providing essential information on ethical values and standards to both United Nations personnel and the general public. Between 1 August 2016 and 31 December 2017, the website received 137,756 page views and 99,875 unique page views. It is available in English on iSeek and

www.un.org/en/ethics, as well as on the sites of the five other official languages of the United Nations.

66. The Ethics Office shared broadcasts and iSeek articles on gifts during the December holiday period and on the financial disclosure programme prior to the annual filing month of March.

E. Standard-setting and policy support

67. The Ethics Office continued to provide advice and support to other departments and offices and various United Nations entities in developing policies and standards pertaining to ethics and integrity at the institutional, individual and process levels. The topics included the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Framework of the United Nations Secretariat, a code of ethics and/or code of conduct for various categories of personnel and country offices, a code of conduct for United Nations staff employing domestic workers, vetting for conflicts of interest, the personal use of social media and the application of standards of conduct for the international civil service.

68. At the request of the Secretary-General, as contained in his report entitled "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach" (A/71/818 and A/71/818/Corr.1), the Ethics Office reviewed the regulatory frameworks on the prohibited conduct of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse. The related report prepared by the Office helped to enhance understanding of sexual misconduct in the workplace as well as applicable provisions aimed at its prevention and remediation.

69. The Ethics Office served as the Secretariat's lead technical substantive contributor to the thematic reports prepared by the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Review of mechanisms and policies addressing conflict of interest in the United Nations system" and "Review of whistle-blower policies and practices in United Nations system organizations".

70. The Office provided advice on potential areas of risk involving the engagement of certain types of personnel and their contractual arrangements, to minimize reputational risk to the Organization while enhancing the Organization's ability to tap into their special skills and expertise. Such personnel include seconded uniformed personnel and those serving under "when actually employed", one-dollar-per-year or consultant contractual arrangements.

71. At the invitation of the Office of Human Resources Management and in support of the Secretariat's first United Nations Staff Engagement Survey, conducted in 2017, the Ethics Office provided suggestions regarding questions on ethics and integrity.

IV. Ethics Panel of the United Nations and Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations

72. Established in December 2007 pursuant to the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2007/11 and ST/SGB/2007/11/Amend.1, the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, originally known as the United Nations Ethics Committee, is mandated to create a unified set of ethical standards and policies for the Secretariat and separately administered organs and programmes. It consults on important and complex ethics matters having system-wide implications. The Ethics Panel is chaired by the Director of the Ethics Office. The Ethics Adviser of the United Nations Population Fund served as Alternate Chair from October 2016 to September 2017, with the Ethics Adviser of the United Nations Children's Fund serving as from October 2017.

73. The Ethics Panel is composed of the heads of the ethics offices of the funds and programmes and the Secretariat. Pursuant to ST/SGB/2007/11 and ST/SGB/2007/11/Amend.1, the Ethics Office provides ethics-related services to the staff of those separately administered organs and programmes that have not yet designated an ethics officer.

74. The Ethics Panel commemorated the tenth anniversary of its establishment, holding a special meeting on 13 April 2017 with the Secretary-General. Panel members benefited from a direct dialogue with him on the importance of enhancing an organizational culture of integrity, transparency and accountability and the role of ethics offices in that regard. The Secretary-General placed special emphasis on the Organization's policy of zero tolerance for sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse and on the need to prevent and address them in a timely manner.

75. From August 2016 to December 2017, the Ethics Panel held 15 meetings. In addition, its members regularly consulted one another on a wide range of issues. The Panel reviewed the annual reports prepared by member ethics offices and relevant policies pertaining to or having significant implications for their core mandated areas of work. These included the terms of reference of the Ethics Office, the policy on system-wide application of the ethical standards under which the Panel was established, and the Secretariat's policy on protection against retaliation.

76. The Ethics Panel reviewed issues relating to the Organization's policy of zero tolerance for sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse. The role of the ethics function was emphasized in providing advice and guidance on expected staff behaviour and ways to prevent sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, in line with the Organization's relevant policies and procedures.

77. The Ethics Panel also devoted its attention to harmonizing approaches to conflict-of-interest management through vetting, financial disclosure and conflict-of-interest disclosure programmes. It discussed pre-appointment vetting in the Secretariat and in some other entities to review staff at various levels during the recruitment process. The Panel held a consultation with the Joint Inspection Unit in support of its system-wide study on conflicts of interest.

78. A working group on gifts was established within the Ethics Panel to review existing policies and practices of various entities in relation to gifts.

79. The Ethics Panel worked to develop a common approach to staff engagement in outside activities, particularly political activities and the use of social media, to ensure the independence and impartiality of their status as international civil servants.

80. As indicated in section III.C above, the Chair of the Ethics Panel consulted its members in her independent review of four matters referred by the staff members concerned from their respective funds or programmes. One determination was upheld in August 2016. With respect to the three reviews carried out in 2017, one case was reversed and the other two were upheld. The ethics offices in question are recused from the reviews of their determinations in such cases to preserve the independence of the process.

81. As also indicated in section III.C, the Alternate Chair of the Ethics Panel conducted a preliminary review of one complaint upon the referral of the Director of the Ethics Office. The Alternate Chair also independently reviewed three determinations made by the Office, upholding two of them and reversing one.

82. The Ethics Panel is the sole mandated and formalized ethics mechanism in the United Nations system and the broader intergovernmental arena. The Ethics Office and other Panel members continued to participate in the activities of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations. The Network was established in June 2010 in

support of the Secretary-General's efforts to promote system-wide collaboration on ethics-related issues within the United Nations family. Serving as a broad forum for United Nations system entities, affiliated international organizations and international financial institutions, the Network provides support for professional development, benchmarking and the exchange of information with regard to ethics policies and practices.

83. The membership of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations continued to grow through the participation of intergovernmental organizations having consultative and collaborative arrangements with the United Nations system. The ninth meeting of the Network, held in Rome from 11 to 14 July 2017, was hosted by the Director of the Ethics Office of the World Food Programme and chaired by the Director of the Ethics Office of the United Nations Development Programme.

84. Enhancing collaboration with and supporting United Nations system entities and other international organizations, the Ethics Office responded to multiple requests regarding financial disclosure, conflict-of-interest management, ethics training, database management, and protection against retaliation for whistle-blowers. Advice and guidance were provided to 16 entities.

V. Observations and conclusion

85. The period from August 2016 to December 2017 witnessed significant changes in the operations of the United Nations and the Ethics Office.

86. Foremost among those changes was the assumption of duties by the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations, who proposed a set of reforms, including management reforms aimed at streamlining programming and budgeting, delegating managerial authority and demanding greater accountability, as well as a new architecture aimed at strengthening effectiveness and accountability. Through greater delegation of authority entrusted to staff for greater effectiveness of the Organization, a culture of integrity, transparency and accountability is enhanced.

87. The contributions of a preventive ethics function, providing behavioural guidance and just-in-time advice on "grey" areas of conduct, could be invaluable for the culture of the Organization. Moreover, in keeping up to date with the latest administrative and technical innovations, the international civil service should continue to demonstrate the highest degree of independence, impartiality, integrity, efficiency, probity, transparency and accountability. Shifting the management paradigm from insufficient or slow action, due to risk-averseness, towards greater and faster action is facilitated by identifying risks and mitigating them prior to taking action.

88. In respect of reputational risks, ethics training and frequent communications about standards of conduct can prevent unintended ethical lapses, inappropriate behaviour in the workplace or poor judgment due to ignorance. The 2016 Leadership Dialogue, on preventing fraud and corruption, and the 2017 Dialogue, on standards of conduct, served to communicate zero tolerance for certain behaviours and encouraged staff to observe the highest professional and ethical standards.

89. Financial and outside-interest disclosures and ethics advice can prevent or manage conflicts of interest, reducing opportunities for fraud, corruption, nepotism and other unethical acts as well as protecting innocent staff from the appearance of misconduct. To make more efficient the confidential disclosure and safeguarding of information, the Ethics Office and the Office of Information and Communications Technology developed and rolled out a new online filing platform.

90. The protection of staff who report wrongdoing and cooperate with duly authorized audits and investigations encourages internal reporting of problems and serves as a deterrent to those tempted to engage in misconduct. An enhanced protection policy was introduced by the Secretary-General in January 2017 and further strengthened in November 2017. With a view to the effective implementation of this enhanced policy, the General Assembly approved an additional post for the Ethics Office, starting in 2018.

91. The value of the preventive ethics function was demonstrated when, for the first time in the United Nations, the Presidents of the General Assembly at its seventy-first and seventy-second sessions took part in the financial disclosure programme and their offices received ethics induction briefings. The current Secretary-General participated in pre-appointment interest disclosure vetting prior to taking office. Such developments help to maintain public trust and credibility with respect to the United Nations and provide a role model for leadership.

92. When the Ethics Panel of the United Nations commemorated its tenth anniversary, the Secretary-General recognized that the ethics function had taken root within the United Nations system.

93. The increasing membership in the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations also shows that the ethics function is spreading among intergovernmental and multilateral organizations.

94. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/263, the following measures for strengthening the independence of the Ethics Office are proposed:

(a) Direct annual reporting by the Ethics Office on its activities to the General Assembly, in line with the practice of OIOS and as recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit;

(b) Adding a reporting line to the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for guidance with respect to the Office's workplans and the performance evaluation of the Head of the Office for greater operational independence, while enhancing the accountability of the Office; and, in situations in which the Secretary-General may not be in a position to receive advice from the Office on matters owing to a conflict of interest, the Head of the Office may consult with the Advisory Committee, which may bring a matter to the attention of the Assembly, as appropriate;

(c) Raising the rank of the Head of the Ethics Office from the Director (D-2) level to the level of Assistant Secretary-General (starting with the next Head of the Office) with a view to greater visibility and given the importance accorded to the ethics function;

(d) Introducing term limits for the Head of the Office to one five-year term, with the possibility of renewal for one additional term, in line with the term limit established by the Assembly for the United Nations Ombudsman. Such term limits could be applicable to the incumbent Head of the Office as from the beginning of the incumbent's next appointment;

(e) Ensuring security of tenure for the Head of the Office for greater operational independence by allowing termination of appointment only for cases of serious misconduct or unsatisfactory performance;

(f) Restricting re-employment for the Head of the Office, with no possibility of other employment within the Secretariat, in line with the restrictions applicable to the United Nations Ombudsman.

95. In relation to the request for data regarding gifts, a global gift registry is being piloted in New York. The Ethics Office provides advice and guidance to all staff on honours, decorations, favours, gifts and remuneration.

96. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report. The Assembly is also requested to approve recommendations for strengthening the independence of the Ethics Office, as requested by the Assembly in paragraph 45 of resolution 71/263 and as outlined in paragraph 94 (a), (b) and (c) above, and to take note of paragraph 94 (d), (e) and (f) above.**

Annex

Financial disclosure programme compliance level, 2016 and 2017

A. 2016

United Nations entity	*Required filings*	*Completed filings*	*Incidences of non-compliance*
United Nations Secretariat			
Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions secretariat	2	2	–
United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination secretariat	3	3	–
Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate	3	3	–
Department for General Assembly and Conference Management	24	24	–
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	49	49	–
Department of Management	210	210	–
Department of Political Affairs, including special political missions	387	387	–
Department of Public Information	40	40	–
Department of Safety and Security	20	20	–
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	71	71	–
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	40	40	–
Economic Commission for Africa	132	132	–
Economic Commission for Europe	11	11	–
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	99	99	–
Ethics Office	13	13	–
Executive Office of the Secretary-General	19	19	–
International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda	1	1	–
International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia	30	30	–
International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals	28	28	–
Office for Disarmament Affairs	4	4	–
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	35	35	–
Office of Administration of Justice	2	2	–
Office of Internal Oversight Services	11	11	–
Office of Legal Affairs	22	22	–
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	20	20	–
Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services	3	3	–
Office of the President of the General Assembly	5	5	–
Office of the Special Adviser on Africa	4	4	–
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan	1	1	–

United Nations entity	*Required filings*	*Completed filings*	*Incidences of non-compliance*
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region	7	7	–
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict	1	1	–
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict	3	3	–
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children	1	1	–
Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States	3	3	–
Peacebuilding Support Office	3	3	–
Regional Commissions New York Office	1	1	–
Special Court for Sierra Leone	1	1	–
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria	9	9	–
Special Tribunal for Lebanon	32	32	–
United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund	78	78	–
United Nations Office to the African Union	4	4	–
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	22	22	–
United Nations Office at Geneva	94	94	–
United Nations Office at Nairobi	46	46	–
United Nations Office at Vienna	17	17	–
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	81	81	–
Subtotal (excluding peacekeeping operations)	**1 692**	**1 692**	**–**
Peacekeeping operations	1 538	1 538	–
United Nations bodies/agencies and others	2 274	2 274	–
Total	**5 504**	**5 504**	**–**

B. 2017

United Nations entity	*Required filings*	*Completed filings*	*Incidences of non-compliance*
United Nations Secretariat			
Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions secretariat	2	2	–
United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination secretariat	3	3	–
Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate	4	4	–
Department for General Assembly and Conference Management	25	25	–
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	49	49	–
Department of Management	190	190	–
Department of Political Affairs	451	451	–

United Nations entity	*Required filings*	*Completed filings*	*Incidences of non-compliance*
Department of Public Information	40	40	–
Department of Safety and Security	21	21	–
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	92	92	–
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	54	54	–
Economic Commission for Africa	135	135	–
Economic Commission for Europe	8	8	–
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	95	95	–
Ethics Office	13	13	–
Executive Office of the Secretary-General	20	19	1
International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia	30	30	–
International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals	47	47	–
Office for Disarmament Affairs	7	7	–
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	55	55	–
Office of Administration of Justice	2	2	–
Office of Internal Oversight Services	13	13	–
Office of Legal Affairs	23	23	–
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	21	21	–
Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services	3	3	–
Office of the President of the General Assembly	5	5	–
Office of the Special Adviser on Africa	4	4	–
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan	1	1	–
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region	3	3	–
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict	2	2	–
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children	3	3	–
Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States	4	4	–
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria	8	8	–
Peacebuilding Support Office	6	6	–
Regional Commissions New York Office	1	1	–
Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone	1	1	–
Special Tribunal for Lebanon	28	28	–
United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund	73	73	–
United Nations Office to African Union	4	4	–
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	22	22	–
United Nations Office at Geneva	95	95	–

United Nations entity	*Required filings*	*Completed filings*	*Incidences of non-compliance*
United Nations Office at Nairobi	43	43	–
United Nations Office at Vienna	16	16	–
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	86	86	–
Subtotal (excluding peacekeeping operations)	**1 808**	**1 807**	**1**
Peacekeeping operations	1 534	1 533	1
United Nations bodies/agencies and others	2 469	2 469	–
Total	**5 811**	**5 809**	**2**